

# THE ARGOSY

MARCH 1901

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## THE SHEPHERD

THE shepherd left his flock, and then, the steep  
Ascending, heard low music of the fells  
Distantly chiming, as a sound that swells  
And falls unheeded on a world asleep.

Cold to his heart, and faint, and lost, and dim,  
His mountain-home and all its wonders lay.  
Loudly he heard the City calling him :  
" Shepherd, from these dull fields, away, away !

" Is yours a task to fit the soul of man ?  
Gathers your life no gain—but moth, and rust !  
And is it truth, our day is but a span,  
Bridging the destinies of dust and dust ?

" Shepherd, the herding of a flock was sweet  
Once, in the primal world's fresh-scented age.  
Recall it so ! But here's a later page,  
Storied with tales of conquest and defeat,

" Hatred and love, pity, and hope, and pain,  
Where millions surge and other millions strive ;  
These cry to you, and shall you still refrain  
From splendid life who are not yet alive ?

"The land is teeming with a fruitful seed,  
But barren you : dreaming of better days,  
You linger long in these deserted ways,  
Your youth despoiled and your doom decreed.

"Come to the City, come, it is not well  
To waste your spirit when its powers are grown ;  
Gird up your loins : assault this citadel,  
And know the glories that the great have known."

The shepherd's veins were quick with pride and fear;  
Musing awhile, he hastened to obey.  
A maiden called him, but he would not hear,  
Forth to the City straight he took his way.

## II

The City's curse, steel in our human blood,  
Poisons the weak, but medicines the strong  
For task and toil. This wind, that bears along  
Us men, as straws on some relentless flood,

Breathes to a lonely soul the word of fire.  
But you, O foolish shepherd, could not see  
The flaming light unquench'd, that bids aspire,  
There in your mountain-ranges calm and free.

You, for the burning spark that cannot die,  
Changed but the blazing torches of the town,  
With a rare zest you raised the brand on high,  
And with an equal madness flung it down.

It was too late, your blood was cursed. Too late  
To stem the raging current wild and deep.

And who should pity, in his luckless state,  
The man, once shepherd, herded with the sheep?

You fled the mountains, fled the meads bedew'd,  
Once they were yours : you lost them once for all.  
Gifts of the gods are nevermore renew'd,  
That you refused they will not now recall

Without regret you shared the common lot,  
Hopeless their daily labour, yours the same ;  
Joy you had none, and yet you miss'd it not,  
Base were your pleasures, yet you knew no shame.

Without regret, for once you trod again  
Those pastured fields awhile, and hotly flung  
The City's scorn on some that heard with pain,  
But could not answer in their rustic tongue.

They could not answer, but their silence gave  
The just rebuke you could not understand.  
What if they perish in an empty land ?  
The City sinks you in a nameless grave.

And here's the moral, bitterly bestow'd,  
Not upon you, but on ourselves, who rest  
Here with content in this befoul'd abode,  
Who might yet fly to Nature and be blest.

Foolish, O shepherd, you : more foolish yet  
The poet, whom one voice persistent calls,  
Who will not dare the fate before him set,  
But breaks his heart against the City's walls.

HERBERT MORRAH.

## GIUSEPPE VERDI: AN ANECDOTIC RECORD

“**T**HOU hast all seasons for thine own, O Death.” So wrote the poet. It is the merest truism. Yet surely never was there a blacker January than that which opened the first year of the new century; never surely within so many weeks had the departure to be chronicled of so many figures notable in the great world at large or in the lesser world at home. Every name was of sad importance to some circle, but two names stand out as being specially noteworthy. Our beloved Queen Victoria passed to her rest rich in years and in honour, secure in the lasting regard of her people—nay, in the lasting regard of all the civilised peoples of the globe: a monument of virtue, of womanly worth, and of queenly dignity, an example to all who may follow her. A few days later and Verdi, the grand old man of music, was called—he, too, full of years and crowned with honours, the most striking phenomenon that the history of the art which he professed has ever seen. Born in 1813, within a few months of Wagner, he had survived his great contemporary for eighteen years, and at eighty-seven was living a life free from care and full of gentleness and happiness in a magnificent villa only a few miles from where he first saw the light. All the rewards that a successful career can bring were his, and he had greater wealth than any other living composer, with the single exception of Franchetti, who belongs to the Italian branch of the Rothschild family, and whose mother can repeat of him what Meyerbeer’s mother said of her son: “He is a musician, but not of necessity.” It required a strong character to live the life that Verdi had lived; to preserve at the end of eighty-seven years the freshness of interest, the intensity of purpose, the industry which characterised him up almost to the last; and it would not be straining a point to find the foundation of that character in the simple and laborious life which he lived during his earlier years.

No great musician who ever made a name for himself was more humbly born than Verdi, though it has been the rule for great musicians to be born humbly. His father kept a little inn and grocery shop in the main street of the village of Roncole, anciently in the Duchy of Parma, but at this time under the dominion of the French. There were but two hundred souls all told in Roncole, and the Verdi house, moreover, stood quite isolated from the rest of the houses. Some one who has seen it asks us to “imagine a kind of tumble-down house of stone and mortar, standing almost alone in the midst of a fertile plain sown with maize and hemp.” It is, in fact, a mere village cottage,



with sloping roof, most of the rooms being upon the ground floor, with a state bedroom on the top. The open door and the window, at which groceries and cheap wine were displayed, remind travellers very forcibly of the small sweetstuff-shops still to be seen in rural parts of England. Environment must always count for something, and one can easily understand how an artist born in such a spot should preserve for the whole of his life a love for solitude which amounted almost to a craze. Imagination must be left to picture the humbleness of the future composer's earliest surroundings, but one or two incidents may be cited to help out the conception. Verdi's musical aptitude soon showed itself to his parents, and when the father made him a pupil of the village church organist it was with the view of his ultimately becoming the worthy man's successor. His ambition for the lad took no higher flight, yet when Verdi succeeded to the post in his eleventh year the salary was only thirty-six francs a year! After a twelvemonth it was raised to forty francs; but Verdi's income as organist, including the fees from marriages, &c., never exceeded a hundred francs. Yet to earn this wretched pittance the composer remained organist at Roncole for six years, during a part of which time he had to walk every Sunday and festival-day from Busseto, a town three miles distant, whither he had been sent for his general education.

Many incidents in the life of Verdi are connected with the church of Roncole. There is a very picturesque story according to which it became an asylum for him when he was little more than a year old. The Austrian and Russian forces were driving the French before them, and the poor people of Roncole had the horrors of war brought to their own doors. Some of them fled to the church for protection, Verdi's mother, with her babe, among the rest. She, it seems, did not stop in the main room of the sanctuary, but climbed the ladder into the belfry, and there remained till the soldiers had left the town. With what pathetic interest must Verdi have looked at that little church in after years! If the incident really happened as stated—and there is no reason to doubt that it did—there was a peculiar fitness in Verdi's dedicating himself to the service of the church, which he did by becoming an acolyte to the village priest when he was seven years old. It was his first day in that capacity, and when the organ began to play he forgot all about his duties, "listening in open-mouthed delight, so that the demand of the priest for water fell upon deaf ears." The story goes that "after a second or third repetition had proved equally ineffectual, the priest gave him a box on the ears, which sent him rolling down the altar steps. He was picked up insensible, but his first request when he regained consciousness was an appeal to be allowed to learn an instrument capable of producing such divine harmony." Many years later his name was found scratched on the case of the organ, and traces of it are still piously preserved. It was from one of the priests that his father bought the spinet by which Verdi learned to play. His Italian biographer, while examining it minutely, found written in it a

certificate by one Stefano Cavaletti in 1821, which stated that he had repaired the instrument and added the pedal without charge, "in consideration of the good disposition which the young Giuseppe Verdi shows in learning to play on the said instrument, which quite suffices to satisfy me."

This is a very pretty story, but it is not nearly so pretty as that which tells of how Verdi got first a patron and then a wife. I have said that he had been sent to Busseto for his general education. Now, in Busseto there lived a certain musical amateur, Antonio Barezzi, a distiller, who numbered the elder Verdi among his customers. Barezzi was one of the big men of the place, and being musical, Verdi naturally sought his acquaintance. The connection proved in every way helpful, especially in opening to the young artist the various avenues of music which the town afforded. First, there was a cathedral, with a sour old pedant named Provesi as organist, in which on special occasions an orchestra played, Barezzi being one of the members. Busseto had a philharmonic society too, which met for practice in Barezzi's house. Verdi at this time lived with a shoemaker, but Barezzi presently opened his home to him, gave him employment in his warehouse, and allowed him the treat of practising on a piano fresh from Vienna. Nor was this all. Barezzi had a daughter; the daughter played the piano. Result—the young people fell in love with each other, just as Haydn had done with the barber's daughter under somewhat similar circumstances, and when Verdi asked her hand the father—consented! "Yes, certainly," was his answer to the friend who had interceded for the struggling musician. "How could I refuse so good a young man as Verdi? True, he is not rich, but he has genius and industry, which are better than patrimony." The marriage took place in 1835. It turned out a very happy one, but alas! the happiness was short-lived. Two children had been born to the pair. Both sickened and died in 1840, and within a few weeks after the last had been laid to rest the mother was taken. Verdi had just accepted an engagement to write a comic opera, and he went on with it, while all the time his heart was breaking. He was so poor, too, at this period of his career that he had to pawn his dead wife's trinkets for the rent; indeed, it is said that his triple bereavement was due, humanly speaking, to his lack of means for securing proper medical attendance.

But I am anticipating. Three years before his marriage—that is to say in 1832, when he was not quite nineteen—he had unsuccessfully endeavoured to obtain an entrance to the Conservatoire of Milan. The statement has all along been made that the director of the Conservatoire had declined to admit him on the ground that he was not sufficiently talented—that, in fact, there was no hope of ever making him a musician. Verdi himself gave an emphatic contradiction to this absurd report in a letter which he addressed to an Italian journal not long before his death. "I underwent," he says, "a sort of examination on some of my compositions, playing them on the piano before Basily,

Piantanida, Angeleri, and old Rolla, to whom I had had a letter of introduction from my master Provesi, of Busseto. A week later I called on Rolla, and he said to me: 'You must give up the idea of the Conservatoire, and take lessons in town from some new master, Luvigna or Negri.' I heard nothing more from the Conservatoire, and had no answer to my application for admission, nor did I ever hear why I was rejected." This letter sufficiently refutes the statement that the composer had been told he had no talent, but it still leaves us without an explanation of the curious circumstance that the man who has made melody for humanity for half a century and more was refused admission to the great training institution of his native land. Perhaps it was just as well that he was refused, for at these monster institutions it is too often the case that, as Burns said of Scots university students, the candidates "gang in stirks and come oot asses." At any rate, Verdi did as well outside, and when he returned from Milan to Busseto as successor to Provesi, that discerning musician remarked to him: "You will accomplish much; some day you will be a great master."

Verdi began to compose at once, and it was not long before he showed that his old preceptor was fully justified in his forecast. In 1838 he bade goodbye to Busseto for the wider world of Milan, and in the November of next year he produced his first opera at La Scala. That opera is never heard now—even its name is unfamiliar—but it proved such a success at the time that Ricordi, the music publisher, bought the score for £70, and commissions for three other operas were thrust on the composer. Unfortunately, it was just about this date that he lost his wife and two children. The first of the three operas was presented at La Scala, but so complete was the fiasco that the director felt himself justified in declining to receive the two others which he had agreed to take. The unhappy composer had practically to begin his career again. Touching pictures have been drawn of him at this time, sitting moody and silent for a whole year and more, writing not so much as a note, seeing next to nobody, and declaring that for him life had ceased to be worth living. After his terrible bereavement nothing else was to be expected from his naturally melancholy temperament. But youth gets over most things, even the calamities of death, and in time Verdi spurred himself up to renewed effort. In the spring of 1842 his "Nabuco," an opera on the not very promising subject of Nebuchadnezzar, was produced, and a new era dawned for the composer. "With this score," he once said, "my musical career really began"; while, in view of the fact that Signorina Strepponi, who appeared in the cast, became his wife, his private life may be said to have started again under happy auspices.

We hear nothing of "Nabuco" nowadays—the Biblical subject would make it unwelcome in England in any case—but it was followed directly by two operas which are still occasionally to be found on the playbills—"I Lombardi" in 1843, and "Ernani" in 1844. At both the rival London opera-houses the latter was for a considerable time the most

admired and the most frequently played of the composer's works. Of course the critics did not like it, but the critics do not count for much with the public. They declared at this time that Verdi's music was noisy and commonplace, with too much brass in the orchestration, and too much unison in the choruses. Practically the same thing had been said about Rossini, and yet Rossini was for many years the most brilliant star in the operatic firmament. There was some truth in the charge against Verdi, no doubt; but it matters nothing now, for "Ernani" belonged to Verdi's earlier style, and he left it far behind him in the styles which he developed later, the styles by which, as a finished artist, he must be judged. Moreover, "Ernani" is seldom played now, and our interest in it is therefore almost purely historical.

The works by which Verdi first made any name in the wide world of music were the works which still hold their place amongst us, though not perhaps among the higher devotees of opera, whose taste in these days runs almost exclusively to Wagner. They were "Rigoletto," "Il Trovatore," and "La Traviata." The first of the trio was produced in 1851 at Venice. Like Meyerbeer's "Huguenots," Gounod's "Faust," and Bizet's "Carmen," it did not take the fancy of the public at first, but, like those works, it ultimately won its way to the forefront of popular esteem. One of the airs, "La donna e mobile," made an instantaneous hit, and has been hummed and sung to death in every quarter of the globe since. There is an interesting story connected with its composition. In the course of the first rehearsal of the opera the tenor Mirate, who had been cast for the part of the Duke of Mantua, observed that a piece he had to sing alone was wanting in his part. "There is plenty of time," said the composer; "I will give it to you later on." Every day the demand was repeated, and every day the same answer was given. Mirate began to be anxious and to get out of patience, when at last, a few evenings before the first performance, Verdi brought him a paper on which he had written the famous *canzone*. Mirate opened the paper, saw that the music was easy, and appeared enchanted. "Now," said the composer, "you must give me your word of honour that you will not sing this melody at home, that you will not hum it, that you will not even whistle it—in a word, that you will allow no one whatever to hear it before the actual performance." Naturally the singer wanted to know the reason for all the mystery. "Because," replied Verdi, "I don't wish all Venice to be singing the air before my opera is brought out." The anecdote is significant enough. Fancy Wagner running any risk of having his music caught up by the man in the street and whistled all over the place as Verdi's "La donna e mobile" was being whistled the day after the first performance!

It is usual—or at any rate it used to be usual—to condemn the story of "La Traviata" as "questionable," but in these days, when daughters take their mothers to see Sarah Bernhardt in "La Dame aux Camélias," the play on which the opera is founded, it would be super-

fluous to dwell upon that point. Besides, opera-goers pay but slight attention to the libretto of an opera: it is the dresses and the diamonds of the lady artists, the high notes of the tenor, and the action in the love scenes that chiefly interest them. In any case, "*La Traviata*," despite its libretto, was a huge success when first produced in London. Elsewhere, indeed, it was not so fortunate, but this was mainly due to errors in the cast. Thus, Madame Donatelli, who impersonated the delicate, sickly heroine, was one of the stoutest ladies on the stage or off it; and when at the beginning of the third act the doctor declares that consumption has wasted away the young lady, and that she cannot live more than a few hours, the audience was thrown into a state of perfectly uproarious merriment—a state very different from that necessary to appreciate the tragic action of the last act. London was spared this sort of thing, and London took "*La Traviata*" to its heart. The veteran Mr. Kuhe, so long associated with musical life in Brighton, thinks, to be sure, that the furore created by it was largely due to Mdle. Piccolomini, whose *début* at Her Majesty's Opera coincided with its first production in 1856. No doubt Piccolomini had something to do with it. During the few years she remained on the stage this fascinating little lady was the spoiled darling of the public.

Nobody seems to have quite understood the vogue which she obtained. By no means a great vocalist, not particularly distinguished as an actress, small and agreeable-looking, but far from being a beauty, she yet produced as great a sensation as though she had united in her person the musical genius of a Jenny Lind and the dramatic power of a Rachel with the features of a goddess. It was a lucky thing for Verdi that she had been cast for "*La Traviata*," for it needed a strong personality such as hers to combat the opposition of its enemies. Two days after its first performance, as Mr. Kuhe recalls, a long letter appeared in the *Times*, expressing in the most indignant terms the astonishment of the writer that a work of such immoral tendency should ever have received the stage licence. The letter was followed up by references from several pulpits on the succeeding Sunday. Then appeared another letter in the leading journal, this time from the impresario of Her Majesty's Opera, defending the tendency of the libretto, pointing out that, far from doing harm, it was rather calculated to impress on the spectators the invariable reward of virtue and the inevitable punishment of wrong-doing. The effect of all the controversy was that every one was crazy to see this "wicked opera," which thus obtained a run unlike anything that Verdi had hitherto experienced with his works. "*La Traviata*" is, in truth, not a very noble specimen of Italian opera, but its abundant melody and the genuine emotion of many of its strains have saved it from that oblivion which has overtaken other works of its class and time. With regard to "*Il Trovatore*," the most generally popular of all Verdi's operas, there is not much to say. It evoked frenzied excitement when it was first produced in Rome, and its spread thereafter was electrical.

"Theatre after theatre produced it, so eagerly did subscribers and patrons clamour." At Naples three houses were giving it about the same time. It is, indeed, a richly melodious work, but we have come to look for something more than melody in an opera since Wagner revolutionised the music-drama, and it is doubtful if "*Il Trovatore*" will survive far into the new century.

Of Verdi's later operas there is no need to speak in detail here, especially as the points of interest connected with them are for the most part technical. In "*Aida*," produced in 1871, the composer struck out into what was, for him, quite a new style. Ismail Pasha had just built himself a grand opera-house at Cairo, and, thinking to emulate Western potentates as a patron of art, he commissioned Verdi to write an opera for him. The composer was paid £3000 for his work, and when the time came "the spacious theatre blazed with fantastic dresses and showy uniforms, and the curtain rose on a drama which gave a glimpse to the Arabs, Copts, and Franks present of the life and religion, the loves and hates of ancient Pharaonic times." Verdi had made a fortune long before this, and being now a man of close upon three-score, it was thought that he would rest on his laurels. But Verdi had not yet sounded the depths of his genius. He had still to give us "*Othello*" and "*Falstaff*," the one in 1887, when he was seventy-four, the other in 1893, when he was eighty! Just think of it—the very finest work of the composer's life produced when he had touched the four-score! Here, surely, is a lesson for the degenerates of our day, who mask their laziness with fine philosophical terms like pessimism and world-richness and similar hollow, idle phrases! It was even said since "*Falstaff*" was produced that Verdi would have given us another Shakespearean opera but for the awful task of writing so many notes. It was the mere manual labour that vexed him, not the running dry of the fount of inspiration. A friend surprised him one day when he was writing the "*Falstaff*" music. "He wrote," says this authority, "with remarkable rapidity and preciseness, without corrections or scratches, knowing what he wanted, and astonishing bystanders with the surety and swiftness of his prodigious inspiration. I know not what he had been writing exactly, but I remembered how he smiled to himself in great enjoyment of the page just in progress, and as he finished it he turned round with a sigh: 'If I work at this rate I shall never finish the score. I used to work eight hours at a stretch, and feel all the better for it, and now after an hour's work I am already tired.'" This from a man of eighty, and after sixty years of almost continuous labour! In the light of it all "*Falstaff*" seems like a miracle.

Something of Verdi's vitality was no doubt due, as I have already hinted, to the remarkable simplicity and regularity of his life. Many years ago—as far back as 1849 indeed—he had bought the fine country estate of Sant' Agata, near his birthplace, and there he lived a quiet life of almost complete seclusion. He kept himself



aloof from society, and though a life Senator, took no part in politics.

Apart from music, his interests were mainly agricultural. He had no children by his second wife, and since the death of the latter in 1897 he had been, so far as relatives were concerned, practically alone in the world. He has been represented as taciturn and parsimonious, but he was neither the one nor the other, though he was sometimes blunt in speech, and could generally drive a good bargain. At a rehearsal of "Falstaff" at Milan the singers and musicians gave him an ovation when he entered the opera-house. In response he said: "I thank you all, but will thank you more if you do better in your performances than last time." He seems, indeed, to have been always more or less impatient with his artistes, no doubt because of the artistes' stupidities. Singing with him was not, as it is with so many, a mere matter of voice-production. It meant not only voice, but accentuation, articulation, soul, and enthusiasm. "No," he once remarked to a friend, "you must feel the accents"; and then he told how he was once coaching a celebrated singer in a part that just suited his splendid voice: the man would have been the success of the opera but for this inability to understand what Verdi wanted. "I was asking him to give me more accent, and he was giving me more voice; then I sang to him, and he repeated phrase after phrase correctly, but the care in accentuating was so patent that the whole became worse and worse, and I had to give the man up." It was with singers of this kind that Verdi was apt to lose patience.

At the rehearsals of his operas he showed the artistes how he wished the parts to be sung, and if they failed to catch his ideas it was the worse for themselves. At a certain rehearsal of "Othello" he was trying to teach the Cassio of the cast how to imitate the voice of a drunkard. "That won't do at all," he shouted to the singer. "You must imitate the drunkard like this." And Verdi sang the passage as he wished it sung. "But I can't change my voice," grumbled the vocalist. "Oh yes you can," said Verdi; "drink a glass too much on the night of the performance, and you will do splendidly." About his fellow composers of the younger school Verdi was not enthusiastic. He was staying in Milan when Mascagni, the composer of "Cavalleria Rusticana," was about to produce his opera "Ratcliffe." Mascagni was very anxious that Verdi should attend the first performance. Being warned, however, that if he called upon him Verdi would always be "not at home," Mascagni lay in wait for him on the staircase of the hotel until the old man appeared, when he preferred his request. The result was disastrous. "No," said Verdi, "I can't do that. If I went, everybody would want to know next day what I thought of your opera, and I really shouldn't know what to say." Leoncavallo's experience was not much happier. Verdi did go to a rehearsal of one of his works, and at the end went up to the orchestra and asked a friend to point out the composer. The friend did so, and anxiously awaited

results. But all that Verdi said was: "Oh, so Leoncavallo is the young man in the light overcoat, is he?" And after looking at him fixedly for a few moments he left the theatre.

There are anecdotes which show Verdi in a better light. Perhaps the best one to quote is that connected with the production of "*Aida*" at Milan in 1872. A certain person named Bertoni went from a neighbouring village to hear the opera. His outing, including supper, cost him 15 francs 19 centimes. He happened not to like "*Aida*." However, next day, finding it praised on all hands, he resolved to give it another trial. This time he spent 20 francs, and was more dissatisfied than ever. Full of anger, he wrote to Verdi telling him that the opera was a failure, doomed to early oblivion, and asking for the return of 35 francs 90 centimes, which sum, he alleged, he had wasted in going to hear it. Verdi was not offended in the least; in fact, he sided with the aggrieved one. Taking a pen in hand, he authorised his publisher to send Bertoni 31 francs 50 centimes, adding: "It is not quite so much as the gentleman demands, but then he could have had his supper at home." The story may not be true, but, as a witty Frenchman once said of a similar tale, "*Si non e Verdi e ben Trovatore*." With regard to Verdi's alleged parsimony, it is enough to know that he has left all he possessed—something like £120,000—to the home for aged and indigent musicians which he had already founded at Milan. This Casa di Riposo, or House of Rest, provides an asylum where aged and destitute musicians and operatic librettists may be cared for in the declining years of their life. Candidates for its charities will not be lacking, for in these days of keen competition the great majority of musicians have a very sharp struggle to earn their daily bread, even when they are in the prime of life and health. Verdi himself was one of fortune's favourites, and it says much for his generosity that, instead of spending his large earnings on a life of ease and luxury, he should devote the savings of his long career to the interests of poor brother musicians who shall come after him.

Verdi's visits to England have been passed almost without mention by the obituary-writers. He came first in 1847, to superintend the production of his now totally forgotten opera, "*I Masnadieri*," in which Jenny Lind and the famous Lablache both sang. The Queen—who always liked Verdi's music—and the Prince Consort were present on the occasion, and the house was crowded from floor to ceiling. There was plenty of applause, no doubt because the composer conducted in person, but the critics were severe in their condemnation of the music, and the public did not continue to favour the opera, which was, in fact, a dead failure. Mr. Chorley, the leading critic of the time, declared that the opera was the worst that had been given at Her Majesty's Theatre for many a day, and that it "must increase Signor Verdi's discredit with every one who has an ear." Verdi was disgusted, and shook the dust of England off his feet, never to return save for a couple of flying visits—the one in 1862 and the other in 1875, when



he conducted his "Requiem" at the Royal Albert Hall. He might well have forgiven us our early indifference, for nowhere did his more popular operas create a greater furore than in England, where, indeed, they were for many years all the rage. Whether even his best works will live is a question upon which, happily, I am not here called upon to express an opinion. But of this I am certain, that not for many a long day shall we see a composer who, beginning with a success before he is well out of his teens, shall live to startle the art world with a consummate masterpiece, written with all the verve and vitality of youth, on the borders of the four-score. If the world remembers Verdi for nothing else it must surely remember him for that last grand achievement, the "Falstaff" of the octogenarian.

J. CUTHBERT HADDEN.

## AN IMPRESSION

(SCHUBERT'S IMPROMPTU IN "A FLAT")

A LONG, long stretch of barren rocky shore—  
 'Tis midnight, and the silver moon is high ;  
 Dark banks of cloud are gathering more and more  
 Athwart the pallid star-besprinkled sky :  
 All there is silent, save the ceaseless song  
 Of moon-touched waves fretting the gleaming sand,  
 And west-wind whispering, ever low and long,  
 The ocean's message to the listening land.  
 And still and silent as the barren rocks—  
 His soul shut up in utter loneliness—  
 There stands a man, who battles with the shocks  
 Of Fate's grim tempests, firm against the stress.  
 A type of all endurance, strong and stern,  
 Upon whose brow the Victor's crown doth burn.

ALICE D. BRAHAM.

## THE WOOLGATHERERS

## I

JUST where the long line of the Berwyns trends southward, and the hills begin to lose their sterner qualities of ruggedness, there comes a gap in the chain as if a link had been lost. This is Cwm Berwyn. Its precipitous sides drop to a smooth tableland of sufficient extent to make a sizeable farm, as farms go among the hill peasantry. And on this green plain there stands a small homestead, whose cluster of buildings show from the heights around as miniatures. A hundred yards from this oasis the ground rises again, and a trailing path leads onward for many miles among the recesses of the hills.

It was along this beaten track on a glorious May morning that a party of girls was moving. A cart headed the procession, high piled with sacks of potatoes and baskets of provisions. Each young woman also carried a basket, wide and shallow, packed to its rim, and neatly covered with a gleaming white cloth.

At times the stillness was broken by the clamour of their voices ; then a whim of silence spread among them, and they trudged mutely forward.

At the horse's head walked a girl who had no basket ; she held a switch in her hand, with which she occasionally tapped the animal's flank. When conversation was going forward she looked backward over her shoulder to make her observations, and her voice rang clear and bell-like above the babel of shriller tones.

All the girls had their winsey skirts kilted about the hips, displaying the short homespun petticoat, with an inch or two of coarse knitted stocking above stoutly made roomy boots. Each also wore a blue flannel apron and a small plaided shawl. The costume was invariable, the only points of difference being in the colour of the shawl or the arrangement of the stripes in the petticoat.

"*Duw*,<sup>1</sup> girls, but it's hot !" said a heavy-limbed maiden bringing up the rear.

"For shame, Jane Ann, with your *Duw*, and don't forget the Sabbath was yesterday," said a neighbour in a mock, chiding manner.

"I shall die !" exclaimed Jane Ann unrepentingly.

"You are too fat, Jane Ann."

"Fat I am," agreed the girl, without malice.

The road wound in and out, now skirting ravines, now running beneath the sheltering heights of ragged headland ; and anon passing over a cob, revealed wide expanses of rolling hills, line upon line,

<sup>1</sup> *Duw*—God.

battalions stretching to the silver-rimmed horizon. There was no sign of life other than scattered sheep and shaggy mountain ponies; the sheep on distant slopes looked like maggots on cabbage leaves. At wide intervals a rough dwelling was sighted, tucked away in a gully, or peeping from the shelter of some overhanging cliff like a face from a hood.

The girls had been astir since dawn, and already had covered ten out of the fifteen miles of their journey. But as the sun mounted higher and higher their energies grew lax; the heavier ones lagged, and all trudged with the signs of weariness upon them. It was Jane Ann who finally declared for a halt, and plumped down upon the cushiony turf forthwith. The others followed her example; and the horse began to crop the scanty herbage.

Out of the baskets came broadly-built loaves, basins of butter, and bottles of milk; and the girls feil to with an appetite.

"*Diaw!*"<sup>1</sup> muttered Jane Ann in a profane manner, as she eyed ruefully the shortness of her milk.

The air grew hotter; the sun beat mercilessly upon the naked hills; not a tree nor a bush was to be seen; the expanse was diversified only by outcropping rocks and patches of quaking bogland. The atmosphere was fine and clear as glancing crystal, and blue as a cornflower; where it swam over the rumpled miles of hill and corrie its texture was that of cobweb, the gossamer fibres drawn into cryptic patterns.

When the girls had repacked their baskets they glanced up and down the path with indolent movements, and a glaze of drowsiness was in their eyes. First one and then another stretched themselves upon the turf and dozed into heavy slumber.

There was no sound to disturb them, save an occasional bleating of sheep from far away, or the lazy cawing of a passing rook. Overhead the unstinted blue of the sky seemed naked, and glared brazenly at the sun.

On a distant link of the much-winding path a black speck appeared; now crawling into sight like a fly emerging over the rim of a teacup; now collapsing as it slid into a hollow. It was some time before this moving object became discernible as the figure of a man. Finally it hove round the bend of the road and came upon the group of sleeping girls.

The man was young, fresh-coloured, and bore himself lightly, a well-knit figure of six feet two. His clothing consisted of corduroy trousers, a sleeved waistcoat, and weather-green hat with slouching brim. When he saw the sleepers a smile spread upon his face, and he stepped to the grass to deaden the sound of his movements. In front of the group he halted, and his smile widened to a grin. He passed them in review leisurely. Most of them were round-featured, with muscular cheeks and thick lips; some had dark hair and pallid skins; others were ruddy.

<sup>1</sup> *Diaw!*—The Devil.

But on the outskirts of the group was a girl strikingly dissimilar from the rest. One glance singled her out; she entrapped the eye, as it were; and when the young man in his survey came to her he gave the others no more attention.

It was easy to see that she was tall, and though her figure could hardly be called slender, it was lithe and sinewy in its speaking strength, and quite devoid of the sturdy rotundities that were a prevailing feature with the other girls. Her hair was jet black, her skin ivory white; and the eyelashes lying on the cheek made inky lines on the pure background. Her hands, though rounded and full in shape, were not pudgy, knotty, or misformed, as were those of her friends; and her wrist in its smooth modelling was seemingly as boneless as sculptured marble.

The smile died out of the young man's face and a little pucker formed between the eyebrows. He looked continuously at the girl, and the hum of the morning airs filled his ears.

Several of the sleepers breathed noisily; Jane Ann trumpeted and snored; and one threatened to awake.

The young man stole gently away. He knew the destination of the girls, and expected to see them again before the day was spent.

## II

HE strode on down the mountain, and found the strayed pony he was looking for. At sight of him the small creature whinnied, and trotted towards him, its tangled mane over its eyes, its long tail sweeping the ground. Then they turned in the homeward direction, pony before and man behind, and in due time drew near the spot where the sleeping girls had been. But they had vanished. No—one remained, and she was not yet awake.

The young man's face took on a new expression. Lightly he crept over the grass to her side, and sat down. Then he looked round with shining eyes. He leaned over her. "Little one," he whispered.

She started awake, and sat upright.

"Where are the others? Who are you?" she asked.

He only laughed at her questions.

"Who are you?" she demanded again, with irritation.

He laughed joyously, and threw himself backward upon the grass. A light flush spread over the ivory delicacy of her skin.

"I don't know you from the devil," she said aggressively, to recover her equanimity.

"And I do not know you from an angel," he made answer.

She became confused. "They have played me a trick," she grumbled; "left me asleep. You saw them do it."

"No," he said.

"You tell a lie," she retorted.

But he made no rejoinder; he lay with arms behind his head, staring

at her white neck, and the knot of shining hair nestling under the hat-brim.

"I won't go after the fools," she muttered.

He laughed again.

"Where do you live?" she asked him.

"At Banclyn."

She started.

"You go there too," he said. "But I have not seen you before."

"No," she allowed, with a tossing of the head, "there has been no need. My people had a big farm. But my father and mother are dead, and bad fortune comes to all people."

She pulled at the short grass blades; and he sat upright.

"What is your name?"

She turned upon him in quarrelsome humour. "That is not your business. Bah! Your nose is red."

"And yours is very straight and white, and the little holes are pretty."

"Pooh!" she exclaimed. "I know what you mean. But you are too ugly."

He took his cap from his head.

"See now! Not so bad."

"Why, your hair is red," she cried.

"But yours is black."

"And your eyes are the colour of a pig's."

"And yours deep and black as the lake in winter days."

"I should hate you if I saw you every day," she declared.

"In truth?" he queried.

"In truth," she averred.

After a little pause he repeated his question. "But what is your name?"

She smiled into his eyes and he was surprised.

"Who did you kiss?" she asked suddenly.

"No one."

"That is a lie—perhaps," and the last word belied the weight of the first ones.

"You know I did not kiss any one," he said, looking into her face with a pleasing smile.

But she resisted him.

"Why not?" she jeered.

"Because I did not dare to kiss the one I wished to."

"Was she pretty?"

"She was beautiful."

"Perhaps she would have liked it."

"Do you think she would?"

For reply she sprang to her feet, and brushed her petticoat with her hand.

"Are you going?" he asked.

"I am gone," she replied, looking over her shoulder as she moved away.

Meanwhile a figure came over the rocks behind, scrambling from ledge to ledge and clinging to the tufts of coarse herbage which sprouted in thick bunches from every fissure and cranny. When he alighted on *terra firma* and displayed his stature and physiognomy he seemed a duplicate Caliban. The height was that of a child; the bulk that of a man; and the huge face was preternaturally misshapen. He trundled along on his short legs until he came to the young man seated upon the grass.

"You found the pony," he said in thick tones.

"Yes."

"Shall I take him home?"

"Yes."

Caliban thrust a wide flat thumb over his shoulder; "Who is *she*?"

"Go and find out," said his master.

"Right," gurgled Caliban.

### III

THE bevy of girls reached Banclyn while the day was still young. They had set down their baskets and disposed themselves about the wide kitchen for half an hour's rest and gossip before Kattie arrived. She was accompanied by Caliban, the pony, and their own cart of provisions. They all giggled when they saw Caliban.

"A brave morning, girls," he shouted in at the open door.

Other parties of girls had arrived to the number of forty, and this last baker's dozen made up fifty-three.

These gatherings in high places were annual events. From the low-lying hills the girls of the poorer sort came up to the mountains in late spring, before the time of shearing, and spent several weeks in roaming over the desolate wastes, seeking among the rough reedy herbage for locks and shreds of wool that had fallen or been torn from the fleeces of the sheep. They often secured large quantities in this way; and it was made into yarn and home-spun cloth during the winter time.

They set out early in the mornings with sacks upon their backs. As the wool was picked up it was dropped into their aprons; when these were full it was transferred to the sacks.

At wide intervals about the hills farms lay as oases in a desert, and Banclyn being one of these cultivated spots it supplied rude accommodation for a number of the woolgatherers. In the early evening when the girls began to drop in after an afternoon's wandering, they found the son of the house taking his tea near the fire. He had a word for each, and they bandied jests to and fro, until Kattie came in; when he fell taciturn, and flung the slops from his cup behind the fire without waiting for his mother to do it for him.

Caliban shuffled in, his loose features all agrin.

"Out, out this minute!" cried his mistress, "no room for thee, thou rat!" and Caliban retreated with sidelong glances, amid delighted shrieks of laughter from the girls. They stood about during the evening and knitted and gossiped. At eight o'clock they had supper.

"Boy," said Afrind their hostess, to her son, who stood in a corner adjusting a clean collar, "thou wilt be late." And she winked behind his back to the girls.

"She'll be abed before you get there, Tom," said one.

And then Jane Ann leaned towards a neighbour and made an observation in a noisy whisper, which straightway caused the girls to rock to and fro in paroxysms of laughter. Only Kattie refused to be amused.

When the young man had left the house the girls broke into a flurry of questions.

"Who is it, Afrind?"

"Is it a maidservant?"

"Och, no, indeed!" said Afrind with disdainful flashings of her black eyes. "He has no need to go after maidservants."

Shortly afterwards the girls trooped away to bed.

Naturally, all could not be housed within doors, and the hayloft was called into requisition as a bedchamber. Many of the girls preferred a soft nest in the hay to the rough makeshifts resorted to by the housewife in this strain upon her resources. Those who were to sleep in the hay filed through the doorway and across the yard carrying their quilts and blankets in their arms. Kattie brought up the rear.

Within the shadow of the open stable Caliban was standing, and he gurgled softly to himself with innate satisfaction as he dimly distinguished the twinkling movements of many legs ascending the ladder. When he saw Kattie he plucked her skirt.

"I know a good place—soft as a bird's nest," he said.

"Who is it? Who is it, Kattie?" asked the girls, peering.

"The beast," exclaimed Kattie in disgust.

Caliban shouted a laugh.

The girls retreated, chattering; but Kattie walked into the stable.

"Where has he gone?" she asked quickly in low tones.

"Who?" queried Caliban in his thick voice.

"The mistress's son."

"Tom?" He laughed slyly. "Where the maid is."

"Who is the maid?"

"The one he is to marry."

"Where does she live?"

Caliban snuffled. "The mistress will tell you," he said.

"You tell me."

"If I do not know?" he asked.

"You do know."

He was quite off his guard when Kattie pounced upon him, seized

hold of handfuls of his clothing and shook him with a very passion of strength.

"Tell me," she reiterated.

His laughter ran softly over his lips.

"I could kill you," she cried, flinging him from her and sweeping out into the thickening dusk.

At the yard gate she bumped into a figure. "Oh!"

"Little one!" came in quick glad tones.

She took a step back, replying nothing; and he reached with his hand until his fingers touched the bosom of her dress. She stepped back again. "I was not seeking thee," she said in a defending way.

He moved closer until she could feel the warmth of his body surging about her through the chill night air. He locked his arms about her with a swift strong movement; and for an instant she yielded.

Then tearing herself half free, she held him aloof with hands hard pressed on his chest. "You go to—somebody else," she panted.

"Not again," he whispered.

"Never?"

"Never."

"I do not believe you," she answered and shivered.

After a while they wandered away together; and when Caliban came to shut the gate for the night he stepped out into the road and peered up and down.

It was a month later. The night wind sang softly in the hollows of hills, whispered in the corries, and swept the jagged faces of the crags with the light touch of a passing garment. The moonlight was opalescent where it glinted upon majestic cliffs, silver where it flooded a valley, and full of golden lights when it hung as an aureole upon a headland. Under the shelter of overhanging ledges the shadows lay thick as fleece.

Kattie was sitting within the sheltering gloom of a hayrick. The silence was so intense she could hear the snuffle of Caliban's slumbering through the closed door of the stable. And when a stealthy footstep first touched the flags of the yard she leapt to her feet with a spring.

"Returned!" Her voice was taunting.

He lowered his head, saying nothing.

"Thou art a traitor!" she burst out with irrepressible vehemence.

"It is true," he answered.

"Thine heart is black."

"No," he objected.

"Thou hast deceived me!"

"I have deceived another," he said.

She tossed up her face to the sky and laughed jeeringly.

He sighed, lifting his head.



With a sudden tilting of the body towards him, her eyes ablaze with a diamond light, she whispered under her breath; "And but last night thou wert true!"

"No—false," he said.

"Then—then—" she struggled with her words, "then it is not I—but—*she*?"

"She has first claim," he answered lamely.

"Did I seek thee?" she demanded in fury.

"Thou art a temptation," he murmured.

She reflected, her head slightly aside. "Is she—also a temptation?"

He caught his breath as he swayed between truth and expediency. "No," he replied at length.

She stood erect, looking him full in the face, her strong figure pulsing with its triumph. And the glamour swept over him, the answering light ran into his eyes; he took a step towards her. But she stayed him with her hand.

"Hast thou also loved her to-night?"

"I have not seen her."

"But thou hast been to seek her."

"Yes. Then I came back."

"Was it thy courage that failed thee?"

"It was my heart," he said.

Caliban opened his stable door and peeped out to see what the sound of voices meant. He returned to his lair and drew up his ragged quilt and gurgled with a chastened delight as he composed himself to sleep once more.

#### IV

*CALAN GAUAF* means literally the first day of winter, but among the hill country people it is the name given to the thirteenth of November, that being the termination of the year of service among the farm hands, and the time when the hiring fairs begin.

Dusk was deepening on the evening of the twelfth when Kattie came out of her grandmother's house and went into the barn. She put up her hand to a notch in the beam and reached down an old clog. Then she crossed the yard to the manure heap.

She looked carefully in all directions and also listened intently; but there was no sound, and no one in sight. Then she held the clog before her and made the tour of the manure heap, murmuring:

" 'Dyma Clogsen,  
Lle y mae troed? ' "  
(Here is the clog,  
Where is the foot?)

Round and round she went, walking deliberately, repeating the couplet continuously.

The custom is that an unmarried woman should make the circuit of the manure heap thirteen times, holding an old clog before her, on the eve of *Calan Gauaf*, saying the formula as she goes, and the man who comes within her view during this proceeding is her destined husband.

Kattie had been round the mound nine times. She sighed, walked slower, and took the tenth turn. Not a sign or sound of any kind broke the perfect stillness. She glanced continually towards the road. She began the thirteenth round with the prick of tears in her eyes, and completed it with a breaking sob.

Then with sudden passion she flung the clog away and went out of the yard. She wandered along the road aimlessly, then sat down on a hummock and threw her apron over her head.

At eight o'clock her grandmother came to the house door and called "Kattie." Receiving no reply she went as far as the gate and cried up and down, "Kattie, Kattie." But no answer came.

About ten o'clock that night the moon had risen and glowed upon the whitewashed walls of Bancellyn with mellow radiance. Jane Ann came out of the house with a creel in her hand and went to the peat-stack for fuel to build the morning's fire.

After the gathering of the girls for the woolpicking was over the old woman had persuaded Jane Ann to stay on as maidservant, in view of her son's coming marriage with a young woman of a higher farming rank than his own.

Jane Ann hummed a tune as she crossed the yard and knelt to fill her creel. The moonlight irradiated the hills around with a pallid light that bleached the starved herbage to straw tints.

When she got to her feet again, the full creel poised upon her hip and steadied with her arm, she suddenly noticed two figures on the hither slope of a hill a short distance away. She gazed in wonder, for their contours seemed familiar. It was a man and woman locked in a close embrace.

"Hé-e-e!" murmured Jane Ann in a long-drawn note of sympathy.

In a minute she put her creel down, ran up the ladder and tapped on the hayloft door. Caliban answered from within.

When he had descended with her to the point whence the figures were visible, she said, "Who is the man?"

"The master! *Duw!*" exclaimed Caliban.

"And the woman?"

Caliban fretted with his tongue a moment before he answered, "The pretty one."

"And he is to be wed in the morning," was Jane Ann's succinct comment.

The bridal party rode down the mountain the next morning in a storm of wind. It had raced out of the east in the early hours before

the sun was astir, and now scoured over the hills, shrilling in every hollow, and cutting summits with razor keenness. The mountain folk call the east wind *The Wind of the Feet of the Dead*.

The wedding procession was on horseback, and the animals ambled down the road to the little chapel built under an awning of crag; the place is called *Zoar*. Jane Ann and Caliban stood at the gate to see them go by.

"Where is the pretty one now?" murmured Caliban in his thick tones.

"God knows," rejoined Jane Ann, as she returned indoors to her work.

The day was a merry one. The laughter and clamour of voices within doors utterly drowned the ceaseless whipping of the wind without. As night fell Caliban crept softly in, and sat on the corner of a bench, and threw in his quota of appreciation of the entertainment. Jane Ann was told to give him a plateful of cold rice pudding; and he accepted the delicacy with his loose mouth aslant in an uncertain smile.

After supper the bridegroom went out, as was his custom, to look round the premises and see that all was safe for the night. Caliban shambled after him.

It was in this interval that the bride slipped quietly away; and when she was missed, noisy jests were bandied to and fro. In the midst of which a short, sharp scream was heard overhead, and then voices in altercation.

The guests started up in alarm. There was a clattering down the uncarpeted stairs, and the bride reappeared.

"Who is she? What does she mean?" she cried.

The people hustled one another, and climbed the stairs to the bridal chamber. But they halted in the doorway, a crowd of heads huddled together; and nobody spoke.

In the middle of the floor stood Kattie, silent, surveying them a moment with quiet glances. Then she lifted her hand and pointed to the bride.

"She thinks she is the wife, and I tell her she is not. I am the wife. He has wedded her, but he has not loved her. He loves me. She will have a child, and her heart will be cold, because the father does not love her. She is the fool. She comes with her money, and thinks her price is high. See, he cares nothing. Love has no price. It is all the world."

She drew up her figure proudly, and for the moment her dignity overawed the good folk in the doorway. They cast inquiring glances one to another, and heard her without demur.

The Celt of the hillside is very magnificent in his emotions; his passions overtop him as a man; he may be an infinitely meaner thing than they; but they crown him at crises with a magic aureole. In Kattie's face glowed the very poetry of her womanhood.

It was the bridegroom's mother who broke the spell. Crying with sudden vehemence, "It is a trick, a base trick! See her! See her!" she sprang upon Kattie; and with one accord the crowd surged into the room. They fell upon the hapless girl with blows and howls of execration; they thrust her through the doorway, and pulled her downstairs by inches, maltreating her as they went. At the foot they encountered the bridegroom.

His bewilderment was patent in his face; but when Kattie rolled her wild eyes upon him, he shrank back as if to make way for the boisterous mob and its victim; and he stood in the dark corner under the stairs as they dragged her through the kitchen and finally drove her into the yard.

Every mouth hurled a taunt after her, and every finger pointed as she staggered to her feet.

The wind raced through the hollow of the yard, and swept her clothing round her figure like the clinging draperies of a water nymph. A rude guffaw burst from the doorway; and one woman loosed a shaft of wit that stung Kattie's bewildered wits to frenzy; she flung up her arms and burst into a run, beating her way over the stepping stones, and so out upon the open hills.

Caliban stood upon the steps of the hayloft. He surveyed the scene with uncertain interest. But when Kattie had fled, and her tormentors had retired, his wits slowly stirred. From his poised position he could still catch a glimpse of the hurrying figure in the moonlight; and after some moments he turned into the loft, took his ragged quilt from his shake-down bed, bundled it under his arm, and went in pursuit of the flying girl.

The wind drove into his teeth when he shouted, and thrust his words down his throat again. He trundled along, his head to the gale, and it was all he could do to keep Kattie in sight; she seemed tireless.

On they went, steering straight into the very body of the blast, and the icy draughts penetrated all clothing and scoured the flesh like rushing water.

At length Caliban lost Kattie. She descended into a hollow and did not reappear. He hurried with all his strength, and despite the bitter drubbing of the wind, he was adrip with perspiration, when at last he topped the final cob and saw in the dip below him a disordered heap on the ground.

He advanced cautiously. Dimly, in his mind, vague superstitions were working. A quake of terror shook him as the possibility flitted through his brain that he had been chasing a shadow, and that seeming heap on the ground might be but a boulder tricked out by the moonlight.

But he pushed on, unfolding his quilt; and when he reached the prostrate form he flung it over it, and then stood back and waited.

She did not move.

He leaned over and whispered. "Little girl! see what a brave night, and the quilt is warm."

Finally he sat down to wait. And Jane Ann found him thus when she arrived on the scene an hour before dawn.

## V

THROUGH the bleak wintry days Kattie roamed far and wide over the desolate wastes. She ran with the speed of wind at the approach of any human being; but she wandered among the herds of ponies, and they were tame and friendly with her.

"She is mad," the good people said. "It was the Wind of the Feet of the Dead."

In the night hours she strayed near dwelling-houses, and the startled sleepers heard her voice raised in shrill cries or wild songs; or she laughed—long wild peals of demoniac glee.

Caliban knew the hills as a dog knows a sheep run, but he wandered many miles night after night before he found Kattie's hiding-place. The corner of his old quilt peeping round a boulder attracted his attention, and, dropping on his knees he found a little cave hollowed out of the hillside.

Thenceforth he carried food there every evening.

It was in the dusk of a January afternoon that the young wife of Bancelyn drove the cattle down to the brook to water them. And there she saw Kattie; sitting on a stone at the water's edge. The young woman turned and fled and told them in the house that she had seen a spirit.

It turned out a wild evening. The wind roared over the hills and brought constant storms of blinding sleet. Caliban hooded a sack over his head and shoulders when he set out with Kattie's rations; but the tempest heightened, and the sleet whipped his face until he could scarce make progress even with all his strength, and his sack was soon as sodden as a sponge.

The darkness beat down thick and awesome as a black fleece; and Caliban paused, irresolute. If he were at home he would be permitted to sit by the kitchen fire on such a night as this; and his nest in the hayloft was very warm. But at length he went on again.

The storm grew wilder; the frozen snow lashed his skin like splinters of glass; he leaned on the wind as if it had been a stone wall. He had nothing but instinct to guide him. He groped with his feet among the thick growths of rushes, sometimes sinking to midleg in a swampy patch, sometimes stumbling on broken land with only the blast to buoy him up.

But at last he lost his bearings completely, he stood on a cob like a pinnacle, and the wind beat him to right and left as if he had been a reed. He did not give up, however, and wandered again, hoping for good fortune to steer him aright. But the hardest mountaineer could

not battle unceasingly with the unbridled fury of a January storm; even a dog drops when he is beaten, and so it was with Caliban. His knees finally gave way under him, and he fell to the ground, and instantly was fast asleep. The tempest abated in the small hours of the morning. It was at dawn that the breeze sank to lower tones, and the blue overhead showed in patches. Finally the sun swam over the first ridge of the hills thirty miles away, climbed steadily, topping peak after peak until it flooded the rumpled landscape, and splashed full upon the sleeping Caliban. He stirred, rolled over and sat up.

"A brave morning it is!" he cried exultingly.

"*Boreu brave y mae!*" he repeated cheerily.

When he attempted to get to his feet, he made a grimace, for he was stiff and sore in every bone and joint.

Now the light had come he saw that he had been sleeping within two hundred yards of Kattie's hiding-place. He limped across the sodden turf with a hopeful face.

"Little girl!" he called softly. "Little girl, it is a brave morning."

He listened and then started, his great face one blank expressionless stare. Then he knelt down. A little cry came to his ears, such a tiny thread-like cry. Surely some ewe had strayed and yeaned her offspring in this secluded nook.

The cry came again. It shook him and made him pause. But he crept nearer, and at last dared to look into the corner behind the boulder. Then, for many moments he remained motionless, his eyes fixed in wonder and awe.

Kattie lay with upturned face, serene, silent, and he knew instantly that she was dead. But what was that beside her, rolled many times in his old quilt? He peeped until the cry came again; then reached gently across the dead girl's form and lifted the bundle in his arms.

It took him some time to disclose the mystery, the wrappings of the quilt were so intricate, but at last he brought to light the face of a newly-born infant. He stood in amaze, poor Caliban, looking into the tiny face; and something swelled in his breast and broke in his throat, and a tear fell upon the little stranger's face.

But the next moment he smiled. "'Tis a brave morning," he said to the child, and turned back a fold of the quilt that the morning sun might light up its face.

He carried his burden home and laid it in his nest of hay, and then fetched Jane Ann.

As the news spread from farm to farm visitors dropped in to Ban-cllyn. The old women shook their heads and smiled. "'Tis always in the stormy weather that the babies come," they said.

When May came round again and the girls collected for the wool-gathering once more, the babe was bonny, and was passed from hand

to hand and made much of. Sometimes a girl carried it out on the hills, foregoing a few hours labour for the pleasure of nursing.

And then Caliban would creep away from his work and wander until he found the child, and look wistfully into its face as if to discover whether the new nurse pleased better than the old one.

And on summer evenings, when he went to herd the scattered sheep, he carried the infant with a shawl twisted round his body as is the fashion of the country. And between his whistlings and shoutings to the dogs he talked confidentially to the child. Jane Ann declared that he told the baby all his sins and secrets. And she taught the little one to call him "daddy." It was an act of delicacy on her part towards the household in which she lived.

EMILY P. FINNEMORE.

#### SONG OF A ROSE

BUT an hour doth the Rose retain  
Her glory of exquisite bloom,  
Half revealing the golden heart  
Set deep in its crimson gloom,  
When straightway her petals are torn  
From the ravished corolla, and borne  
By the eager wind to their doom.

And the rose of my heart is fain  
To fall on your heart, and there  
Be held to your will as a rose  
Is held on the wings of air ;  
To perish of rapture brief  
As the joy of a vagrant leaf  
In the wind's unreas'ning care.

GERTRUDE BARTLETT.

## THE NYMPH

THE days smile now! or slip away to eve  
In tender memories, dearer than the Spring;  
And when my lily-swan uplifts her wing  
To gather in the gold the sunsets leave,  
The ripple of the river, touching me,  
Brings back my dream of life's felicity.

So glad is Life! I lie in sweet repose  
Or plait the river's weed into my hair;  
Or gaze upon the water as it flows  
To find some beauteous image smiling there.  
Oh! all the world is changed: and every morn  
Brings great Apollo singing in the Dawn.

Oh, come where Beauty is! Oh, come and stay  
In these warm valleys underneath the hills!  
Rest by the languid waters day by day!  
Shake off the shredded garb of human ills!  
Into the bosom of my kindness creep,  
And I will kiss you into dreaming sleep!

L. DAY.



## THE COURTSHIP OF KEZIA

THE farmhouse kitchen wore a holiday aspect, for it was Saturday afternoon. The huge copper warming-pan shone upon the wall like a ruddy mirror after its recent burnishing, reflecting a distorted image of the old oaken dresser with its glittering brass handles and gleaming china, which stood facing the narrow diamond-paned windows.

The October sun peered hazily through the soft mist, but the fire on the hearth burned brightly. The great kettle was singing loudly against the monotonous purring of Stonewall Jackson, the green-eyed cat, who, having polished his earthenware saucer till it shone like everything else, was waiting for further developments in the shape of tea, and dropping from time to time into a comfortable doze.

Dreaming, too, apparently, was Kezia Heatherstone. So deeply lost in thought that, although the skeleton hand of the white-faced Dutch clock was creeping over the dial and already pointing to a quarter to four, she still sat motionless in her low chair, with her comely round arms, bare to the elbow, wrapped up in her clean apron. On the table at her side, which looked like a little island in the great rambling room, a homely and inviting meal was set. A pleasant scent of hot cakes oozed out from the half-closed oven, so that when the clock should strike four, and the sound of certain heavy boots be heard crunching the gravel outside with praiseworthy punctuality, there would only be the tea to "mask"; but in the meanwhile the hostess sat in her workaday dress, with ruffled hair, and a frown on her broad forehead—regardless of the flight of time!

To tell the truth, perhaps she knew that she was not ill to look at just as she was. Fresh and trim from the top of her well-set head, with its crown of curling auburn hair, to the tip of her strong leather shoes, with their big steel buckles. Her lilac print gown and wide linen apron were quite as becoming as her Sunday dress, albeit she was in the habit of arraying herself in the latter garment, conscious, yet half-ashamed of the fact that the soft green, recommended by the artistic taste of the young shopman at Messrs. Lavender's, "went" remarkably well with her bright hair and vivid colouring. To-day, however, Kezia was in no mood for such vanities; for when a warning click from the Dutchman informed her that whatever came of it he intended to strike the hour in exactly three minutes and a half, she hastily decided that there was only time to roll down her sleeves, slip off her apron, and fasten a bunch of rowan-berries, in default of a brooch, at her collar. At the worst, she hoped vindictively, she was good enough for the like of Israel Thorne—"if not a sight too good," she muttered, with a toss

of her head. Then she got up and poked the fire so violently that her feline companion, roused from a delicious vision of mouse-hunting, leapt high in air, and then retired sulkily to the far end of the rug to be out of the way of the sparks.

The old house was very still. Far away down one of the long passages was the quaint old drawing-room, where Miss Deborah Russell, the mistress of the Heyes, dozed over her book and her solitary cup of tea, and was perhaps a little wistfully envious of Kezia waiting for her weekly visitor in the sunlit houseplace. Everything about her was as dainty as faithful hands could make it; the table was set with priceless old Derby, and a quaint Venetian glass held the sprays of early chrysanthemum at her side. But no one came now to visit Miss Deborah. She had outlived all her own kin, and was going slowly yet surely down her solitary shortening road, with no nearer companion than the girl, half-friend, half-servant, who would have given some of her eager vigorous years to enrich or lengthen that shadowy existence. There had been a time when she had been young and eager like Kezia, and had waited with a more reticent, yet as keen a longing for the sound of footsteps. But that was over ages ago—a soldier's grave in the Far East lay across the path and marked the boundaries of Miss Deborah's youth. Yet the memory of it was green and tender still, and the heavy tramp of the awkward young yeoman hurrying to his tryst never failed to touch a sympathetic chord—she was listening now for it with a gentle amusement, very different to Kezia's petulant watchfulness.

"Three years this Martinmas," remarked that damsel stormily to her furry companion—"three mortal years he's been coming about. Ever since the day the dear mistress said, 'If you really want to keep company, I can trust you, Kezia, and him too, and you may ask him to tea once a week.' Of course I asked him, and of course he came; and every Saturday since he's come and sat in that corner, and stared at me with those big blue eyes of his, and seemed to have something on his mind; and yet, for all he's ever said, we're just exactly where we were three years ago. Company, indeed—pretty sort of company, when he never says a word that he can help, but just goes on looking at a person till one is fair beside themselves! It's getting on my nerves, I declare. And that's a thing I'm not used to and won't stand, Stonewall Jackson, however loud you purr, so there!"

At this unjust accusation the injured General sat up, arched his back and sneezed violently three times, to indicate that it was tea-time, and Israel was late and Kezia wasn't dressed, and altogether he was tired of lovers!

"Now the new young man at Lavender's has got something to say," continued the girl, heedless of disapproval, while she began to measure the tea into the pot. "He mayn't be much to look at, but he has got a tongue in his head, if he isn't six-foot-two in his stocking feet. Talk of a Quakers' meeting," she murmured rebelliously, and then broke off with a blush as the outer door creaked, and a tall, rough-coated man

came heavily in. He looked innocent enough, but the sight of his handsome, smiling simple face seemed to rouse his lady-love to the highest pitch of exasperation.

"How late you are!" she snapped, "and for goodness' sake shut the door; the wind's as cold as a poor man's welcome."

"Not my welcome, I hope, lass," he answered as he obediently fixed the latch, and walked gingerly over the spotless tiles, sinking at once into his accustomed seat by the fire.

"Nobody said you were welcome at all, that I know of," she retorted. "If the tea's brew'd and the cakes burnt to cinders, you've only got yourself to thank."

"Why, Kezia! The church clock was chiming as I crossed the Long Meadow," protested the young fellow, roused to momentary self-defence; "I can't have been more than three minutes coming from there. That old gentleman of yours has got fast."

This was adding insult to injury, it being a well-known article of faith at the Heyes that the Dutchman was infallible.

"It's never fast," she returned. "I'm sure I wonder it isn't slow of a Saturday, such things being catching, but it's as steady as—as Breedon Hill," she concluded, somewhat at a loss for a simile, and sitting down with a founce, while she began filling the cups.

Israel gravely spread his bread-and-butter, and pondered ruefully over this dark speech. In spite of his good looks and splendid carriage, he was not sharp or clever, and he was very shy and deeply in love, a combination which made him no match for his quick-witted companion, who teased the life out of him, and wore him, as he declared, to fiddle-strings, with trying to satisfy her, and yet he could rarely discover what she wanted. For some time he had dimly perceived that she was not happy. She was ready to bite his head off whatever he said or did, and for many weeks now the Saturday meetings, which were the one bright spot of colour in his toilsome days, had been distributed by clouds and storms which came he knew not whence.

It never occurred to him that it was now three years since, blushing to the tips of his ears, he had meekly asked her if he "might spend a bit of time with her, when she wasn't busy," and that the girl now wanted something more—some more definite assurance on which to rest her exacting and eager heart. "To go walking out together," was well enough, and quite the correct thing for a year; but so did half the girls in the village, and many of them changed round, and tried each other's "lads" by mutual agreement, and in the end went off and got married elsewhere. But to go on in this way for so long and still to have no word spoken of a regular and open engagement was a thing unheard of, and hurt her pride sorely. For all that Israel had ever said they were both as free as air, and there had not been wanting gossiping tongues to suggest that the silent young farmer came for the cakes and ale (or rather tea!), and that in the end he would probably marry

Peggie Harrison, though her shoulders were crooked, and her eyes as green as Stonewall Jackson's, but whose father had a farm of his own, and who had never been to service.

All these things stung the girl's proud spirit to the quick, and she could not know that Israel Thorne was toiling day and night to pay off the mortgage on his little homestead, before he felt at liberty to ask any girl to marry him. Neither did she guess that for him there had been only one woman in the world for many a long day, from the time they had sat side by side in the National School and shared each other's sums and gingerbread. That he had always loved her, and should love her till the green grass covered him, and find even the wide courts of heaven empty without her, was a foregone conclusion, but it never struck him that the woman cannot take these things for granted, and that it might be as well to tell her so—thus they wove to their simple lives cross-purposes enough to fill a three-volume novel.

The little meal proceeded heavily, no one was quite satisfied except the cat, to whom Kezia had given by mistake a big saucer of cream, and Israel's well-meant attempts at conversation were so sternly wet-blanketed that he relapsed into silence until when, having finished, they sat on either side of the fire, the girl with her knitting, and the man gloomily tugging at his moustache, the stillness grew too impressive even for him.

How pretty she looked with her busy fingers flashing to and fro, and as he studied her neat trim figure he blundered into an unwonted compliment.

"How nice your gown looks, 'Zia," he observed innocently, "I'm old-fashioned, I suppose. Mother, she always stuck to a print gown. I like you better in that even than in the one you wear of a Sunday!"

"This old thing!" returned Kezia contemptuously, "now my green is worth looking at, every one says it suits me, only it didn't seem worth while to change to-night."

"Well, I think you look well in everything," returned the foolish fellow, declining to pick up the gauntlet flung at his feet.

The girl tossed her head, and then said resignedly, "Some folk think it a compliment when they're too dull to tell one colour from another, but there *are* people who have better eyes."

"The young man at Lavender's, perhaps," blurted out Israel. Why he said it he hardly knew, but he had overheard the name as he broke in upon Kezia's solitude, and it recalled even to his loyal memory a vision of the girl standing on the step of the draper's shop and smiling bewitchingly over her parcels at the dapper young shopman.

Strange to say the incipient jealousy of this speech warmed the wayward damsel's heart, though nothing but mischief danced in her hazel eyes.

"Six, seven, eight, nine, and knit ten rounds plain," she counted composedly. "Why, what do you know about the Lavenders or their nephew either?" she inquired demurely.

"I don't know anything and don't want to," replied Thorne, wondering at himself for feeling so huffy. "Counter-jumpers are not in my line, but folk say he isn't much to look at, any way," he concluded, unconsciously squaring his broad shoulders.

"Appearances are deceitful," said Kezia; "a man's brain may be big, if his body isn't; and he is really most pleasant to talk to."

Israel sighed sadly. "Well, I envy him that," he said humbly. "Some men are glib enough, but I never know what to say."

"That you don't," said his companion, more truthful than polite, "but, as I remarked, Mr. Charles Lavender does. I quite enjoy a chat with him. It isn't all weather and turnips. Not that it matters to me, but I can't help seeing him, he's great friends with the Lows, you know, and I often see him there of a Sunday."

She spoke with an air of profound indifference, but Thorne shuffled his feet uneasily, and felt a growing desire to grind that unoffending young gentleman under his iron heel. He was no match for Kezia at this sort of by-play, and another long pause followed, until he suddenly blundered upon an item of news which seemed to absorb all his companion's attention.

"They say Peggy Harrison's come home, and most likely she'll be asked in church before Christmas, if all goes well."

A scarlet flush sprang into his hearer's face as she bent over her work, but she only asked with dangerous sweetness:

"Oh, indeed! and who's the happy man? You?"

"Me!" cried the young fellow, aghast. "Why, what should I have to do with her? You must be clean out of your seven senses, Kezia!"

"Five are all I can do with, thank you; perhaps you are more clever. And you've no call to shout like that. Every one says you're paying her attention—and why not? There's nothing to prevent you that I know of." And having uttered this ultimatum she got up, stuck her needle savagely through her ball of wool, and began to poke the fire.

"Me pay attention to Peggy, and you don't think it matters," gasped the young man angrily. "Why, you and me, lass——"

"Well, what of you and me?" she retorted, facing him with flashing eyes; "we're just friends and nothing more, and I'm tired of friendship for my part," she concluded, with an irresistible burst of passion. "I think I shall go up to London; I want a change, I'm sick of things here." She spoke out of the irritation that had been simmering for weeks, and without any intention of leading him on, but she had not calculated on the effect of her words. The man's face seemed suddenly transfigured by the wrath that blazed in his tranquil eyes. All his vague doubts and fears focused themselves round his already hated rival, and for once his thoughts were swift enough to connect the girl's desire for change with the fact that her new admirer was only here on a visit.

But the anger and the light went out of his face, leaving him dead-  
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pale. He got up, and put down the great cat who had slept peacefully on his knee, as he said huskily, "Do you mean what you say, my dear, that you're sick of it all, or are you only trying to vex me?"

"I always mean what I say, and what should I want to vex you for?"

"And it's me you're tired of? You don't want me any longer?"

"I never said I wanted you at all, that I remember," she retorted, pouting and wilfully bent on a quarrel.

"And you really wish to go away?" he questioned, dully, scarcely knowing what he said.

"Well, why not? The best of friends must part, and we've not to say been the best of late."

Thorne shook before his tormentor, his strong face working and his hands clenched, but utterly unable to read her enigmatical expression, and taking her flippant words as sober truth. His eyes indeed sought hers wistfully, but she kept her head averted, and after what seemed to him an intolerable time he turned to go, saying in a voice which sounded hoarse, in its agony of repression:

"Then it's all over between us. There's somebody you can fancy better. I was a fool to think you could put up with a clumsy silent fellow like me; and yet, and yet—I was meaning to tell you to-night, only you took me up so short. Miss Deborah was speaking to me this very day. She wants me to be her bailiff now old Holden is gone, and asked me if I thought of settling soon. I told her that all that stood between you and me was that mortgage, there's above a bit to pay off yet. Then she said I had better let my own land and come and make a home here. She couldn't bear the thought of losing you, and there was room and enough and to spare in this big house, I should never be in her way, or she in ours, she told me, God bless her! and I thought——"

He had gone on, so wrapped in his story that he had quite forgotten the crisis, till Kezia's stony face recalled him to himself.

"What a fool I am! What does it all matter, when you are weary of me? But, oh, lass, why did you let me love you, to break my heart and to throw me off at the last?" Excitement made him almost fluent of speech for a moment, but the reaction was coming—he could bear no longer the stress of his pain. He must go before he visibly broke down and shamed himself in her pitiless eyes. "Good-night, and good-bye, Kezia, for I'll never trouble you again," he said, with set lips, and in a moment he was gone.

The loud sound of the closing door brought the girl rapidly to her senses. How empty and lonely the room felt. The Dutchman ticked solemnly and oppressively as though numbering off so many minutes of happiness, gone never to be recalled. The firelight flickered restlessly, Israel's chair stood where he had pushed it back in his anger. How strange he had looked, how still more strangely he had spoken! Had he really cared for her so much? What had she done? What



would life be if she had driven him away for good and all? The thought was unendurable. For a few moments there was a fierce struggle between love and pride, and then she too had opened the door and run out bareheaded into the crisp night air. Thorne was just turning into the Long Meadow, walking as a man in a dream, only conscious that some spring within him was broken and marred for ever. He was startled by the sound of flying footsteps, and turning round the lovers faced each other again, the girl breathless and on the defensive, as she panted with delightful inconsistency:

"What are you going away for?"

The man, whose mental machinery moved more slowly, was absolutely staggered. He made a step towards her, while Kezia discreetly retired towards the house.

"Why, you said you were tired of me," he exclaimed.

"I said I was tired of friendship—I'm not aware that I named any one in particular," she responded, her spirits rising as she saw that he was unconsciously following her masterly retreat until they were on the threshold they had both so hastily crossed. She felt herself once more in command of the situation, but she had reckoned without her host. For once Israel was inspired, and knew that he must give no quarter to his slippery antagonist.

"Look here, Kezia," he said, "I am only a plain man, and I can't understand anything but plain speaking. It must be all or nothing between us now."

The girl's eyes drooped and fell before his eager glance, while her fingers plucked ruthlessly at the rowan berries till they rolled one by one to the floor, followed, under protest, by the long-suffering General, unable to resist, in spite of his years and dignity.

"Don't you know I have loved you, and no one but you all these years," the man persisted.

"Why, yes," she answered at last, with a half-relenting sob, "but you know you never *said* so before, and how could I be quite certain?"

Yet one look at the kind, anxious face bent above her sobered her at last, convincing her that what was play to her was very like death to him. What happened next she hardly knew, but somehow she found herself leaning, half-sobbing, half-laughing, and wholly conquered, against his broad breast.

Miss Deborah Russell rang her bell, but for once Kezia was unmindful of the summons, and at last her mistress came softly to the door, looked in, and, closing it again as softly, went back to her lonely room. What did it matter about the lamp? It was the old, sweet story, lovely and noble and true, whether in the palace or the kitchen!

"I am glad they will not have to wait for their happiness," she said,

with a smile on her gentle old face, looking up at the portrait over the mantelpiece.

"Israel Thorne, you must go!"

Kezia spoke decisively. Love-making was all very well, but there was Miss Deborah sitting in the dark, the fire was burning low, and Stonewall Jackson had wandered off in pursuit of adventures—probably in the dairy!

It was one thing to command, but this silent lover of hers was seized with a strange new eloquence. He was consumed with fears that his new-found happiness might vanish if he did not make all secure, and so well did he plead his cause that he wrung from her a promise that they should be "cried" that very Christmas before he would consent to take his departure.

He must be got rid of after that at any cost, the girl thought, if she was ever to hold up her head again; yet she lingered with him for a moment in the moonlight, with a softened look on her piquant face, while he added, with what he felt to be a magnificent stroke of policy:

"So you'll be choosing your wedding gown before next Martinmas, Kezia?"

"Yes," she answered, with a mischievous laugh, as she shut the door upon him—"at Lavender's!"

CHRISTIAN BURKE.



## SINGAPORE

NARROW portals of sheer cliff—their colour a deep rich red, their bases rising abruptly from a sea of a blueness infinitely tender, their crests crowned by unkempt tangles of grass and brushwood so crudely green that their hue seems, in a manner, to be too vivid for Nature—guard the entrance to the harbour. On either hand little indentations in the surface of these walls mark the concealed positions of forts, where the great guns of the English lurk, hidden but ready for use, like the claws in a tiger's pad. On the left, without the gates, scattered hither and thither up and down the sun-steeped coast, glaring whitewashed bungalows with roofs of red tiles rise amid clumps of strange fruit-trees. On the rolling undulating hill-land further inshore more bungalows are perched, dots of dazzling white on the green landscape, their feet swaddled closely in luxuriant foliage. Upon the highest peak the flagstaff of Mount Faber thrusts an incongruous finger skywards, whence depends a gay decking of bunting which tells to those who wish to know more than half the shipping news of these Eastern seas.

On the waters near at hand strange crafts are afloat : great, unwieldy junks, such as Chinese mariners have built and owned any time these last five thousand years ; tongkangs straining, as they yaw and tack, under vast spreads of sail ; Malay fishing-smacks canting dangerously as they speed homeward with the morning's take, looking like a pack of dust-coloured doves ; a dozen dingy little steam-tramps, the "casters" of all the world, ploughing their way to or from the town at rates which vary from two to five knots an hour, belching forth volumes of greasy black smoke, and snorting uneasily as they go ; dug-outs, hollowed from a single log, propelled this way and that by solitary paddlers—old Malays with fine, deeply scored faces, tanned nearly black in spite of the protection afforded by the round palm-leaf hats, looking silently at the world which, within their memory, has been altered so completely by the restless, inexplicable energy of the alien white folk. And everywhere there is colour—bright colour, and the blending of many hues. The blue of the sea is deep, intense, wonderful ; the sky overhead is cloudless and pale with heat, and from its centre a brazen sun beats down pitilessly upon a panting world ; smitten by its rays grass and foliage seem greener than ever before, the red earth more richly crimson, the orange or tawny sails of the junks, patched and tattered, are little specks of brilliancy against the shimmering waves ; and through this fairy sea the stately liner picks her way without effort, leaving a triangle of white-flecked water in her wake.

Here and there along the shore rise squat pyramids of white stone and plaster. They serve to mark the sewer-outfalls arranged for by the Singapore Municipality, and add one more sign of the incongruous blending of East with West which is the salient quality of this distant town.

The portals passed the scene changes. On the right stands Pûlau Brâni, its chimneys vomiting blackness to the pure sky, its furnaces smelting more than half the tin of the world, transmuting the dull, black ore into slabs of silver-like purity. On the left, vast docks and



A ROAD IN SINGAPORE

coaling-wharves extend for miles along the shore, whither the ships of Asia crowd for aid, as a child runs to a kind nurse to be fed and tended. Here, you would say, the West has ousted the Oriental effectually and for ever; but look more closely. See that stream of hurrying men running with bowed backs from wharf to ship, and back to wharf again, in an endless chain. They are soot-stained so thickly that it is impossible even to hazard a conjecture as to their nationality, but no coalheaver in our straight-laced land was ever yet so scantily clad. Wisps of filthy rag about their loins, and a coal-basket on their backs comprise their entire kit. They are Chinese coolies, foreigners here in equal degree with the white men, who labour thus restlessly for a daily wage of eightpence of our reckoning.

And in this sight you may discover the secret of the land. The white man can supply the brain to plan and organise, since the head suffers less severely than the body from the sweltering heat; but in the tropics he is powerless to do aught unless others come to his aid in performing the bulk of the physical toil. The Malays are the product of their own sleepy, sun-bathed forests; they toil no more when they have tickled the rich earth into bearing them a full crop by means of a little fitful scratching of her surface. If white men need help in their unreasoning schemes they must seek it elsewhere. Therefore the



SINGAPORE: A GENERAL VIEW

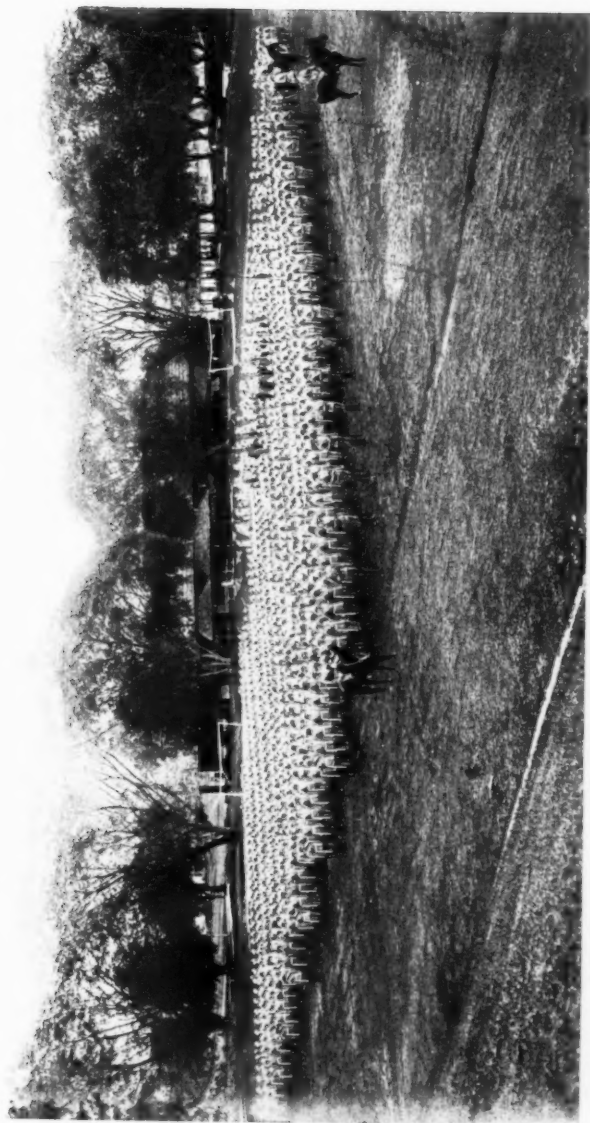
country districts of Southern China, where men breed so quickly that they can barely find standing-room, vomit forth a constant stream of half-savage creatures, who toil unremittingly that their old folk in the distant home-land may live in some comfort during their declining years. Thus it comes to pass that this town, the head and front of all Malayan States, has the appearance of being a part of the mainland of China from which it is separated by thousands of weary leagues of jostling seas.

Let us enter one of the principal streets of the town and look about us.

On either hand, converging in perspective, the metalled roadway is flanked by stuccoed shops one storey high, painted crude blues and

yellows, with here and there a broad expanse of wall covered closely by a collection of jumbled circles, like melting soap-bubbles, such as Chinamen love to trace in their efforts at decoration. The plaster in many places is discoloured with damp in shapeless patches; here and there it is peeling and hangs limply in dirty tatters. Strange garments flutter from the windows of the upper storeys; draggled awnings stretch outwards from doorways; gigantic golden Chinese characters sprawl unevenly in every direction; signs covered with similar inscriptions protrude above the entrances to the shops; the covered verandah-like footways, which are the only side-walks, are filled with varied litters of goods displayed for sale; the rest of the narrow space is crowded by men squatting in groups smoking and gossiping, by men asleep, by men bartering with stony-faced shopkeepers, by pariah dogs nosing and searching, by stray goats, by squalling children, naked, dirty, and happy, and by lounging natives of half a dozen nationalities. Inside each shop, in the dim background, an altar is erected to To-Pe-Kong and his attendant demons. Evil-smelling joss-sticks smoulder before it. A raised platform fills up most of the space flanked by a narrow passage leading to the inner room, and surrounded on all sides by shelves loaded with cloths of Manchester and Germany, with tinned meats and fruits, with moth-eaten edibles beloved by the native world, with Chinese sugar-candy, vermicelli, strings of onions, and quantities of dusty and miscellaneous rubbish. An oblong Chinese counting board and a pile of limp account books fashioned from coarse Chinese paper bear witness to the business aptitude of the trader.

Outside in the roadway all is noise and motion. At one point by the roadside a seller of abominable sweet-stuffs drives a thriving trade which calls for an immense expenditure of vituperation and expletive. Close at hand a street-barber has pitched his portable shop, and is calmly engaged in shaving the head of a fellow Chinaman whose face is wrapped with the luxury of his sensations. A dozen Chinese pedlars stroll through the crowd shaking metal rattles, now and again shouting their wares with voices like those of disconsolate dogs. Groups of coolies walk along staring stupidly at nothing in particular; others trip and shamle beneath double loads suspended across their shoulders at either end of stout sticks. Some are dressed in coarse calico pants and coats, others in soiled loin-cloths. Similar costumes are worn by coal-black Tamils, with their hair in dirty chignons, their tongues busy with the vernacular of Hell. Portly Indian money-lenders pass draped in flowing gauze, with shaven polls and foreheads marked with white caste-tokens—the Marks of the Beast. Grave Parsees; lean and filthy Eurasians; trim duck-clad white men; young Malays swaggering and vulgarly aping the gait and costume of their European masters; grey-beards of the same race, calm, stately, slow, wearing with an old-world dignity the picturesque garb of their people; shaggy-looking ruffians from Celebes, long of hair and lithe of limb; native-born Chinese alert and spry; wild folk, the sweepings



THE FOURTH (THE KING'S OWN) AT SINGAPORE



of the Archipelago ; Sikh policemen in picturesque mufti ; men drawn from half the races of Asia, make up the jostling throng, and only here and there is the face of an old hag, or the carefully veiled form of a younger woman to be found representing the softer sex. But always the Chinese outnumber all other peoples as ten to one, and in the Babel of weird tongues it is their jerky monosyllables that predominate, irking the ear. Streams of vehicles crush their way through the crowds : countless 'rickshaws running in and out careless of darger, indifferent to public convenience or the rules of the road, the sweating



CHINA TOWN, SINGAPORE

pullers deaf to the execrations heaped upon them ; hack-gharris seeking fares or lumbering at the heels of rat-like ponies, with a glimpse of brown or yellow faces seen between the venetians ; a Chinaman on a bicycle with his pigtail in his pocket to keep it clear from the revolving wheels ; a fat Celestial merchant reclining at ease in a victoria drawn by a magnificent pair of greys ; a smart English dog-cart driven furiously by a white helmeted subaltern ; bullock-carts with their lumbering teams ; hand-barrows propelled slowly ; or perhaps the Governor's carriage gay with scarlet uniforms.

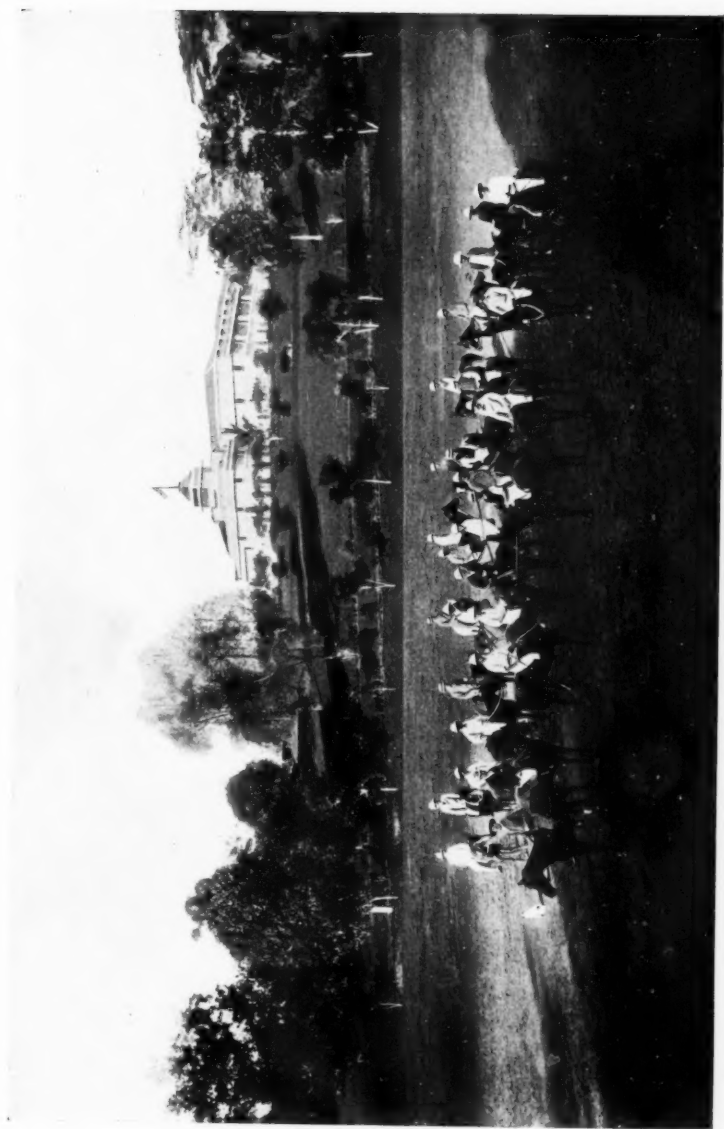
One street of the native quarter is exactly like all the others, but abruptly one passes out of the fetid atmosphere into the space which the Europeans keep sacred to their own uses. Here are comfortable bungalows, race-courses, golf-links, cricket grounds, football fields,



tennis lawns, ball-rooms, clubs, fine public buildings, merchants' offices, banks, English shops. Amid these surroundings white men and pale white women live dreaming of their children far away in the pleasant English country, dreaming of the day when they will return to the land they wistfully name "Home," striving in the meantime to pretend that they are already there! In the native quarter desires are limited. They relate only to dusky women and to full bellies!

Listen! The rumble of many wheels, the clashing of outlandish dialects, the street cries shrill and discordant; the twang and tinkle of strange native lutes, the throb of unseen drums, the scream of conches from Indian temples, the hooting of steamers in the harbour—all these things taken together make up the voice of Singapore! Look! Squalor, wealth, and dirt jumbled indiscriminately together; evil smells, evil-looking refuse, much naked humanity; weird figures from the Arabian Nights; coal, ships, trade, sport, miserable palm-roofed hovels cheek by jowl with palaces; streets given over to barter, others more completely surrendered to vice—the shameless vice of the East; heat, dust, sun-glare; yet all things beautified by the wonderful warmth and colour of the tropics;—such is the outward seeming of this strange city. Here the East and West lie down together, in close proximity but still eternally apart. Neither can subsist without the other, yet each is powerless to change his neighbour, or to wean him from his ancient way!

HUGH CLIFFORD.



POLO AT SINGAPORE



MALICIOUS FORTUNE<sup>1</sup>

*(The Editor has found it necessary to make this slight alteration in the title of Mrs. Düring's Story)*

BY STELLA M. DÜRING, AUTHOR OF "BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA," ETC., ETC

## CHAPTER VII

FOR those wishful to worship, in olden times, the gods themselves, we are told, would provide a sacrifice. For those who have made up their minds to do evil, the devil himself, it is certain, provides an opportunity. When Major Carstairs returned to the drawing-room they were discussing ancient jewellery, a subject in which Beresford was interested. Every one, oddly enough, had something a little unusual to show. Anita produced a bangle with a real Egyptian scarabæus set in it, the joy of her soul, not for its beauty, but for its value. Helen's string of Indian filigree beads drooped from her fingers, though Anita was inclined to dispute their claims to consideration on the grounds that they were, in India, more or less cheap. Even Dickie, serious for once, took from his watch chain a piece of green jade, roughly set as a seal in a bit of soft gold, on which was beautifully engraved the head of Augustus Cæsar.

"I picked it up on the sands near Hastings, thought it was a chalk marble, I did really, it was round and smooth and just like a marble, and I dropped it into my waistcoat pocket. But it was soft, and I got into the way of scratching it, and one day I saw a little glisten of gold and this thing was inside the marble, embedded in the chalk, it was really. Now do be serious, it's true, honcur bright!" And whilst they all greeted a request from Dickie that they would be serious with the derision it merited, he might have realised, had he been so inclined, how impossible it is for the man who has elected to play low comedy parts in life ever to rise to anything else.

"Here, let's look at it," said Beresford, breaking in on his pathetic assurances that he was in earnest for once. "If what you say is true it's probably very valuable."

"So is this, I believe," and Major Carstairs produced from the corner of his waistcoat pocket something carelessly wrapped up in a cigarette paper.

A sudden flash and glitter answered the light from the big lamp under which Helen was sitting, and drew all eyes to the palm of Major Carstairs' hand.

<sup>1</sup> Copyright 1901 by Stella M. Düring in the United States of America.

"Very unusual, isn't it," said Beresford, taking the ring and examining the setting, "Indian symbols, arn't they?"

"But—what a magnificent topaz!" said Helen almost awed. "I never saw one take the light like that before."

"It isn't a topaz, it's a pink diamond, and it was once the eye of a little Indian idol, so I have been told. It was given me by my first colonel, a man to whom I was very much attached——"

Carstairs broke off, he was not a man who easily got over an attachment.

"What idol was it?" asked Helen with soft and kindly eyes.

"Siva. A one-eyed monstrosity——"

"Oh, we've got one!" and Anita promptly produced a little bronze figure from a cabinet close by, a reposeful little figure with a blank expressionless face and one eye, wide, impassive, stoney, carved perpendicularly in the centre of his forehead. "Why, Phillip, this one has a diamond in his forehead, too."

"Yes, I knew, nothing of any value though, not like that one of Carstairs," and as he spoke he dropped the ring into the shellpink palm Helen held out to receive it.

"Don't put it on," said Carstairs, laying a quick hand on her arm. It was too late. Already the stone was flashing its little beams and arrows of liquid light all over the back of Helen's hand.

"Why not?" she asked.

"It's—it's so unlucky! I—I wish you hadn't."

Helen's face was a study in astonished amusement. Major Carstairs was really disturbed.

"But you surely are not serious! You don't really believe——"

"I'm quite serious, and I can't help believing. I've only seen it worn twice, and each time disaster followed—real disaster. New side to my character, isn't it, Miss Thorneycroft!" laughing though with an evident effort. "You didn't suspect me of—anything so weakminded, did you!"

"I certainly didn't. I can hardly believe you are not in fun, even yet. What was it that happened?"

Major Carstairs' face clouded.

"I—it—was something painful. I—I can't quite explain. Give it to me, please, Miss Thorneycroft. Really and truly, as the children say, I don't like to see you wear it."

But this time Helen laughed outright.

"This is very interesting, isn't it, Nan!" turning a bright, amused face from one to another of the little group. "What do you suppose will happen to me, Major Carstairs? If I tumble over the cliff, as I nearly did yesterday, you can pick me up and exhibit me as a most satisfactory fulfilment of prophecy, can't you! Philip, he really is afraid something will happen to me!"

"Nonsense, Nell, he is joking."

"He isn't. Major Carstairs, I'm going to prove your fears un-

founded and cure you for life of unworthy superstitions. I'm going to wear it all night."

"Well, of course, if you will!"—with an uncomfortable smile. "I suppose I'm a fool, but—I would rather you didn't."

He did not quite regain his usual manner all the evening; there was a decided uneasiness about him that delighted Helen, for not only did it afford her an opportunity for mischievously teasing him by showing him the diamond flashing on her hand at every opportunity, but his anxiety carried with it a subtle flattery that touched her. It was perhaps a little softness about her heart, born of that suggestion of subtle flattery, that made her pause as she met him in the long corridor when she went to her room at night.

He had been upstairs to change his dress-coat for a smoking-jacket, and the touch of carelessness and colour about it became him very well. He lifted his embroidered cap from his head by its tassel as Helen met him, and she spoke with a smile.

"Would you really rather I gave this back to you to-night?" holding up her ringed hand.

"I would really rather."

All the cloud was back in his eyes again. Helen looked up at him almost with wonder, as she slipped the ring—it was much too large for her—from her finger and laid it in his open hand.

"Good-night," she said gently.

He did not answer her, for she left him standing there at grips with the wildest, wickedest thought that ever yet came in the guise of temptation to a man pushed to extremity.

In the morning she was greeted with exaggerated satisfaction. Every one of them, it seemed, had spent the hours of darkness in grim anticipation of what might have happened to her, and the sight of her, alive and well, was presumably more than any one expected.

"Give the nasty thing back, Nell," implored Anita. "I shall never know a happy moment till it is out of your possession."

"No," said Helen with a laughing look at Major Carstairs, "I shan't! I'm going to keep it as a reminder that our friends are sometimes very different from what we fancy them."

Perhaps she expected Major Carstairs to contradict her, to at least reassure Anita by the acknowledgement that the ring was once more in his own possession. He did neither. He looked steadily down at his plate in silence, his face both cold and hard. He had caught the look Helen had shot him, and it had covered him with a dull shame. Never again would her frank eyes meet his in the same cordial fashion. Most certainly she would find before the end of the day that he was a friend different from what she had fancied him. He put his untasted cup down as though he was not sure he could hold it.

He wandered moodily off by himself as soon as breakfast was over; he was by no means the pleasant guest this visit, Anita decided, that he had been last. Helen saw him go with an unconscious sigh, and the

sigh was not entirely because Dickie Tiark, undiluted, would be her portion for the morning.

"It's an experiment, but I'm going to try it! I've got to try it!"

That was the conclusion Carstairs reached after some hours of hard thought. If he tried it and the fact came out, his experiment was likely to be followed by a pleasant little sequel in the shape of a request from his superior officers that he would send in his papers, "having been adjudged guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman." Well, even that would be pleasanter than standing his trial for murder, and, when he was acquitted, facing the doubt that in a case of this sort would lurk in every one's mind as to whether he were guilty or not.

When he was acquitted! *If* he was acquitted! Worse things may befall a man adjudged guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman than to be requested to send in his papers.

"Miss Thorneycroft, can you give me—a few minutes?"

It was after dinner the same evening. Helen looked up quickly, she had heard that note in a man's voice before, but not after less than a fortnight's acquaintance.

"It's—impossible," she told herself, with a little laugh and a half-sigh, "but really he sounded like it. As many as you wish, Major Carstairs," she said aloud. "I've nothing to do."

He led the way to where a low stone wall and a thicket of short and sturdy beeches, all blown one way by the ocean winds, shut the garden in from the breezy cliff top. It was an unfortunate choice of locality, because it was where Helen had made her little amateur excursion, the night before, into the realms of science, with fire-flies and phosphorescence as her subject; and the difference between himself then and himself now struck him with a dull sense of wonder.

Helen had nothing to talk about to-night; there was no phosphorescence, and there are never any fire-flies, and it was not a pleasant evening for promenading in the garden, being gusty and chill, with a fitful moon. She looked up at her companion with some surprise. He had something to say, why didn't he say it?

He spoke with her thought.

"Miss Thorneycroft, I am in desperate trouble."

"Indeed!" Helen's voice was frankly surprised. She had mentally reviewed one or two things Major Carstairs might say to her, but she had not expected that. He was silent a moment or two, staring out over the heaving, dark water. It was not easy to go on.

"Can you tell me—what your trouble is?" Helen asked presently. Her voice was gentle. She was sorry for him and his evident difficulty.

"No."

"Can I—help you in any way?"

"Yes, you are the only one in all the world who can."

"And what can I do?"

He looked quickly at her and quickly away again. She was so



entirely unprepared for this thing that he was going to ask her to do—to compel her to do if she would not do it for the asking.

"There is only one thing you can do—and you will certainly refuse."

"Major Carstairs, if I can help you, I will," she said steadily.

"I wish I could—I wish I dare think so," in a hurried undertone.

"Let me put the case plainly. I am in a terrible difficulty, not of my own creating. There is one person who can help me out of it, and that is you. There is only one way in which you can help me out of it, and that is—by marrying me, Miss Thorneycroft!"

Helen drew back sharply, suddenly, into the rustling beech leaves. Was the man mad?

"By—marrying you?" she said, almost in a whisper. "Do you realise what you are saying, Major Carstairs?"

"I realise it—to the full."

The girl laid her hand on the wall-top and studied him frankly. She was recovering from the shock of his words and quietly determined to understand what this thing meant if she could.

"And how will—that—help you?" she asked, and her voice was cold but not unkindly.

"I cannot tell you."

"But—I think I am entitled to some explanation."

"I—cannot give it."

"And yet you—honour me with a proposal of this kind and expect me to accept it?"

"I didn't expect you to accept it," he answered through his set teeth. Helen laughed a little and her head rose with some hauteur.

"You have so much grace left you, sir," she said quietly.

He winced, he deserved it every word, and he was going to deserve worse before the interview was over. And yet—and yet—if he could but have divined the sudden melting at her heart, the unexpected warmth that was dangerously near tenderness for the handsome culprit before her, humbled in his own eyes and doggedly bent on carrying his point by foul means if fair ones failed him—only Helen did not know that. He raised his head.

"Please understand me," he said hoarsely. "What I am asking for is—is the legal tie only—and, except under one possible but not probable combination of circumstances, no one need know of its existence. I assure you on—I assure you most positively that I would claim nothing, exact nothing. You should have complete and entire freedom. The thing would exist, that would be all. You believe me, don't you?"

"Yes, I—I think so. But you do not seem to see, Major Carstairs, that you give me every assurance except the one a woman usually looks for under these circumstances—that you love me!"—her lips curling slightly, her eyes in the dusk half scornful half amused. "I think it would have been better for the success of your proposal to tell me so, even if it isn't quite true, you know."

"No," he said doggedly, "that is a point on which I will not lie to

you"—with sudden impulsive frankness that, in spite of hurrying breath and quickened pulses and a sense of danger remote but none the less real, Helen found irresistibly funny. "If I had to choose a companion, a friend, to share with me everything—and go with me everywhere—there is no one in the world," he paused a moment and then repeated deliberately—"there is no one in the world I would rather have than you. Would not that content you?"

"You are very good," said Helen demurely, and now the smile had broadened in her eyes and a little ripple of laughter had invaded her voice as well, "and I am quite ready to agree that it is better than nothing; but in a husband, Major Carstairs, I must frankly acknowledge, it would be very far from contenting me."

"Then you—you won't," he said slowly.

Helen hesitated. The interview had piqued and interested her, she was far from understanding either it or Major Carstairs' motives, and she meant to get to the bottom of both if she could. Perhaps, if he had had the intuition to leave it where it was, to throw himself upon her mercy, for Helen had about her a good deal of romance and a capacity for reckless generosity, she might have consented. Besides, she was inclined to like him well, so very well. But he lacked the insight that would have guided him to take the safer, nay, the surer path, and the matter, to his thinking, did not admit of delay. It was imperatively necessary that it should be settled to-night, and Major Carstairs was grimly determined that it should only be settled one way. No wonder that his heart throbbed heavily as he waited for Helen's answer. We do not apply boot and thumbscrew even mentally to-day, until we are driven to it.

"I—I think I will take a little time for consideration, Major Carstairs." There was still that trace of sarcastic amusement in her tones. Major Carstairs answered with slow decision.

"There— isn't any time for consideration."

"No—time?" with wonder in her voice.

"No time," he repeated doggedly. "Three weeks from to-morrow you must be my wife."

If he had struck her across the face he could not have stung her more cruelly. She started painfully and he saw it, clenching his hand till the nails cut into his palm.

"Must, Major Carstairs?"

"Must, Miss Thorneycroft!"

She threw up her head, and her haughty glance swept him from head to foot. He felt himself shrink, not so much because of what he had said, as because of what he knew he was going to be obliged to say.

"You are sober," she said with icy contempt, "therefore there is only one possible excuse for you—you are mad! Be good enough to move. I am going in."

But he did not move, he stood squarely in front of her, so that she

could not pass him without either touching him or stepping into the bushes.

"Don't!" he implored hurriedly, "Don't drive me to what I am going to be obliged to say—if you will not listen. I told you I was in desperate trouble. It is worse than that, I am a desperate man. This matter touches others besides myself, and the thing is a must be. Miss Thorneycroft, listen, I will explain afterwards. You will see that I am not entirely without excuse, and that the plan is—is not altogether a bad one. Don't compel me to degrade myself in both your eyes and my own by using the methods I shall be forced to use if you will not listen."

The icy calm of Helen's face froze his rapid pleading.

"Will you be good enough to move?" she said steadily.

"Then you will not agree?"

"To fling away my liberty? To deliberately tie my own hands and deliver myself bound to a man who can behave as you have behaved to-night? No, Major Carstairs, I will never agree. You do not expect it. And now will you kindly stand aside!"

"Not yet," he said through his shut teeth. "Will you be good enough to give me back—the ring that you wore yesterday, Miss Thorneycroft?"

For the first time during the interview fear, real, unmistakable fear shone in Helen's eyes.

"He is mad," she told herself with a quick catch at her heart. "I—I gave it you back," she faltered, "last night—in the corridor!"

"The ring is not in my possession," he went on, his voice oddly even and quite expressionless, "therefore it is presumably in yours. I ask you—to return it, that is all."

A slight shiver passed over the girl before him. She put one hand on the back of a little green iron chair by the side of the path and spoke in a whisper.

"What do you mean? I did return it! You know I did!"

"If it is not given back—by midday to-morrow," he went on in the same mechanical way, almost as though he were repeating a lesson, "I shall take steps to recover my property. It is not the first time you have failed to account for—valuables entrusted to your care."

For a moment Helen stood as though she were turned to stone. Then her figure seemed to dilate, her height increase in the passion of scorn and indignation with which she regarded the man standing dogged, sullen and ashamed before her.

"You coward!" she breathed, with an intensity of contempt that scorched him, and then with a quick spring she passed him, and he heard her run lightly, rapidly towards the house.

He staggered a little as he walked to the stone wall at the bottom of the garden, almost as though he were not quite so sober as Miss Thorneycroft thought him.

"I've done it," he told himself with a dreary laugh, "I've made her

believe I really am—the unutterable cad I've been showing myself. Well, I've got to do it, she's got to believe it, for the present."

He dropped his face on his hands a moment as he stood with his elbows on the wall. Then he raised his head and stared with stupid amazement at his fingers. They were wet.

## CHAPTER VIII

MAJOR CARSTAIRS did not sleep much that night. Helen, he told himself, would do one of two things. She might fly in a passion of indignation and tears to her sister, and pour the tale of his infamy into her sympathetic ears, in which case there would be nothing for him to do but get out of an untenable position with what remnants of respectability were left him. Say it was a joke, a momentary aberration of intellect, anything but a definite intention, and take what chances he had of being believed. For, inexcusable as was the use to which he had put the knowledge he owed to Dickie Tiark's loose tongue, abominable as was the threat he had lowered himself to make use of in compelling Helen to fall in with his plans, he had never, to do him what justice is possible, intended to go beyond the threat.

Or she might, and this was the view his necessities inclined him to accept, shrink so painfully from any stirring up of the muddy waters she had just come through, substantiated as Mrs. MacArthur's tale would be by a second accusation of the same kind, that she would be willing to take any step, make any sacrifice to avoid it. If she adopted this second course his path was plain and straight before him, and he would endeavour so to tread it as to appear in the end not quite so utterly despicable in her eyes as he stood now. This, he told himself, was after yesterday as much as he could reasonably hope for. He frowned and bit his lip as he accepted the conviction; it was a peculiarly painful one.

And Helen! What had she done? Her first impulse had been, as Major Carstairs had foreseen, to fly to Anita for sympathy, to appeal to Philip to avenge the outrage she had suffered; but a little burst of laughter and talk met her in the hall; visitors had evidently arrived while she had been in the garden; the room seemed to be full of people. And she realised suddenly that any attempt at speech would end in a hoarse cry, for that terrible foe of all things feminine, of which she had heard much and so far knew nothing, hysteria, had gripped her by the throat, and in silence lay her only chance of self-control.

She flew upstairs to her own room in the quiet and the dark, and threw herself face downwards on her little white bed, choking and trembling with the sobs that would come now. Oh, cowardly, base, ungentlemanly, could she, after all, hurl a worse epithet at him than that! And she had thought him so different! There, if Helen could only have realised it, lay the chief sting—he had seemed to her so

different! She found herself at last sitting up, tearless and still, asking in amazement and woe if she could have heard aright. Was it possible! Had he really sunk so low as to threaten her with an infamous lie! And why? Helen turned from the echoing blankness that met these inquiries to others. What was she to do? Tell Anita! Beg Philip to thrust this false friend from the shelter of his roof! Denounce him as a liar and a sneak to all who knew him! He deserved it all, but—Helen had had just that pause for consideration that Major Carstairs foresaw would be likely to work so powerfully for the success of his plans. Go to Philip and Anita a second time within the month with a story of disappearing property and false accusation? Could she expect to be believed—a second time?

"They will think I am afflicted with kleptomania," she told herself with a curt laugh. "It's the most charitable thing they can think."

And suppose Major Carstairs took it into his head to deny the whole thing, to represent the interview as existing solely in her imagination! A man who could be guilty of one piece of knavery would not shrink from another!

"Then they will think I am mad!" she decided, conscious of a bitter amusement through her blank dismay.

Suppose she decided, as every moment made it more probable she would decide, not to tell either Philip or Anita of this second arrow of outrageous fortune—what was the alternative? Marriage with a man she honestly despised, that she would fain have persuaded herself she loathed for his ill-doing. To marry him! To give him claims upon her that could not be denied, control over her that even the newest among her sisters do not find it easy to set aside! "I assure you most positively that I would claim nothing, exact nothing. You should have complete and entire freedom!" The words, the tone of his voice, that even the recollection of his iniquities could not render altogether unpleasant, rang in her ears again, and it was proof of how profound had been her faith in him before he had so cruelly destroyed it, that even now she believed in his assurance. She pushed the soft bronze hair from her temple with a quick white wrist.

"I am considering it!" she told herself wonderingly, "considering it seriously! Oh, I hate him! I hate him! Nothing shall induce me to listen to his wicked plans. I had rather face all that both he and Mrs. MacArthur can say ten times over. Marry him! I detest him! I never will, never, never, *never!*" the very vehemence of which resolution was against the chances in favour of its being kept.

The hardest thing Major Carstairs had had to do in the whole course of his life so far was to go down to breakfast next morning. He hesitated a painful moment, with his hand on the door. Then he pushed it open and went in, and his first furtive glance conveyed to him that Anita met him as usual and that Helen was not there. He drew a long breath of relief. Whatever developments were on the road they had not arrived yet.

"Morning, my dear fellow," said Beresford cordial but preoccupied. "Pile of letters for you. See?" Philip read his own letters and expected others to do the same.

Carstairs promptly buried himself behind one of them; never was correspondence more welcome. What it was about he had not the least idea, but Helen's absence and silence were significant, and he formed rapid plans behind its shelter. Presently he looked up.

"Didn't you say you had a mount you could lend me, Beresford?"

"Yes, there is Blackcap, eating his head off, hasn't half enough to do. Ride him as much as you like. Trumble will bless you for it. What d'you want him for to-day?"

"I—I have to ride into Trentborough, there are a few—telegrams," with an uncertain look at his letter.

"All right, you're welcome to Blackcap. If you are going into Trentborough, take Helen with you, she's a capital horsewoman and she would enjoy it, wouldn't you Helen!"

The girl stooped to kiss Anita; she had that instant entered the room. Carstairs watched her steadily, an almost unendurable anxiety in his eyes as she passed quietly to her place at the table, growing paler and paler with every step she took, and from the bottom of his soul he pitied her.

"Not this morning, thank you, Philip. I have a bad headache, that is the reason I am late."

She drank her tea and ate her toast, and lent a willing ear to Dickie's wild suggestions of remedies for headache, and smiled and talked much as usual. But at Major Keith Carstairs she looked not at all. A warm little glow of admiration for a girl who could take the buffets of life, and especially the buffet it had fallen to him to deal her, with an eye as cheerful and a front as undaunted as his own crept about his heart. But it would never do for Anita to think they had quarrelled. He leaned across and spoke, and he admired his own courage as he did so.

"Then you won't ride into Trentborough with me this morning?"

Slowly she raised the darkly fringed, white lids that hid her eyes, and pierced him, scorched him with such a look of scorn, reproach and sorrow mingled, that he sat straight up in the effort it cost him to meet it. After that all the world would know that they had quarrelled. Well, perhaps it was better so. It would certainly make what he had decided he must do easier to carry out.

"I shall ride home by Maldon Edge," he told Philip as he ran an experienced eye over Blackcap, who was fidgeting on the gravel with a groom at his head. "Anything I can do for you in Trentborough?"

Not that he expected there would be, but Helen was within earshot, and as it was not impossible Helen would wish to speak to him it was as well she should know where he was to be found.

"No, thanks, there's nothing particular. Say, old fellow, Blackcap's going to give you a lively time, I'm afraid, and he's only on the snaffle."

"Oh, he's all right ; we shall be good friends in five minutes."

He laughed a little grimly as he spoke, for Blackcap rolled a watchful eye with a vicious red rim to it. If he did manage to pitch him off and break his neck for him before the morning was over, so much the better, perhaps, for everybody. The next moment he was up and through the gates, riding with the assured and easy seat of the cavalryman, and Blackcap, who did not approve of strangers, was dancing sideways with his own shadow all up the road.

"Was he out yesterday ?" Beresford asked, a little uneasily.

"Yes, sir, took 'im out myself. Th' Major's all right, sir," with a satisfied grin. "Bring 'im 'ome like a lamb, sir, you see if 'e don't."

Carstairs had been right in his suspicion that Helen might perhaps wish to speak to him. The road home from Maldon Edge was over the moors. They spread themselves on either side of him, all a-hum with bees and a-glitter with tiny butterflies, scarlet and blue. The heather was in its first flush, and here and there a pool blinked like a blue eye up at the blue heaven, and a grey boulder cropped up, bare and grim, harebells and bracken crowding round its foot. The sea, a quivering silver line, flashed before him, and something in the exhilaration of the air, the gladness of the sunshine, the swing and rhythm of man and horse in entire sympathy, nay, the very squeak of the saddle against his riding-breeches, filled him with an exquisite content, and banished for the time being every thought that could trouble him. The sight of a quiet figure in white, sitting on a flat-topped rock by the side of the road, brought him back to realities with a jar. He sprang down when he was within a few paces, and led the horse. Helen rose, and they walked on together in silence, Blackcap, who was tired, pacing soberly along beside them, every now and then pushing a soft muzzle against Major Carstairs' arm as if he had known him a lifetime.

"You wished to speak to me ?"

He spoke in pure pity, for it was evident that Helen could not, and the effort to steady his own voice made it sound harsh. She bowed, and once again it was necessary that he should put into words what she was anxious to say.

"You wish to tell me—that you accept my terms of yesterday."

"You have left me no alternative." She had regained her voice, and though it was low it was steady. "You stoop to take advantage of a woman's delicacy, of her shrinking from a position—a publicity—that to any one of—of refinement is—is intolerable. You turn to your own evil ends the fact that I have suffered—suffered cruelly under an unjust, a wicked accusation that any man worthy the name would have resented and avenged if he could. I—I have no desire to reproach you, Major Carstairs ; it would be thrown away. I leave your punishment to—to such gentlemanly feeling as you may happen to possess."

He was silent. In his own mind he agreed with every word she said. He glanced for an instant at the pure, pale profile and cold, angry eyes,



and that glance photographed her face for ever on his brain, clear cut like a cameo.

"You will kindly understand," she went on, "that the infamous lie you have threatened me with has nothing to do with my decision. That I can afford to despise. It is—it is——"

"I know," he interrupted hoarsely. His face cleared a little. He would be spared what he had been dreading all the morning, the necessity of repeating his threat, and assuring her of his intention of fulfilling it to the letter. He was afraid that when the moment arrived he would be absolutely unable to give that assurance. She did not need it! With a relief no words would describe he realised it. She was convinced of the turpitude of his intentions, arguing, probably, that the man capable of making the threat would certainly be capable of fulfilling it. It simplified matters amazingly.

"And now," he said, after a pause broken only by the measured "clud-clud" of Blackcap's hoofs, "I should like to tell you what I have done this morning. I knew, of course," he broke off, vexed to find that his voice was not steady—"I knew that if you had not intended to fall in with my plans you would have told Beresford—the whole story—and—and got me kicked out—as I quite agree I deserve to be. I won't deny that I deliberately calculated on the moral effect that this second—accusation—against you would have, and I knew you would fear Mrs. MacArthur's malice more than mine. I have, as you say, taken an inexcusable advantage of circumstances. I have only one thing to say; I had to! And—and—I'm not offering it as an excuse; it's no excuse!—I'm simply stating a fact. I'm sacrificing you, yes, I know, but it's not to myself, but—to another woman. The injury I am doing you is, after all, not so very serious. The injury I should do her by—by not pursuing my present policy would be irrevocable. That, at least, is how the thing strikes me."

"You speak in riddles," said Helen wearily, "and I'm tired of guessing them. Will you kindly tell me what you have done this morning?"

"I have put our names up in the registrar's office at Trentborough, as parties desirous of entering into a contract of marriage this day three weeks."

Miss Thorneycroft came to a dead stop. Her clenched hands dropped limply at her sides, as, with parted lips and horror-frozen eyes, she stared at her companion.

"Our names are up—in *Trentborough*?"

"Don't take it so," he begged hurriedly, "it was the best thing to do, it was indeed. Don't you see, as things are, we couldn't either of us go through the travesty of a religious ceremony, and that is the only other way. There is no one that knows either of us in Trentborough, if the name had been Beresford I'll allow it might have been different. You needn't mind so much, I'm sure you needn't. No one will ever know."

No one would ever know! It was possible, just possible. No acquaintance of hers was likely to have business in the registrar's office in Trentborough, and Major Carstairs had no acquaintances here at all. A tinge of colour came back to Miss Thorneycroft's lips.

"And—and I thought you would be glad to know," looking steadily at the white road they were cautiously descending, "that I'm going away to-morrow——"

He felt her quick start of surprise and relief.

"Thank you," she said in a half-whisper. His face darkened suddenly and his whip bent under the savage grip of his hands.

"I daresay, after yesterday, you are hardly justified in expecting decent behaviour from me," he said in a furious undertone, "but I must ask you, please, not to show it quite so plainly."

Helen listened, coldly still. What did he expect—after yesterday! She rated him at his true value and he had the audacity to be indignant!

"I shall not go far," mastering himself by an effort, "as it is necessary that I should live in or near Trentborough for—for the present. And I must ask you to make some arrangement for our meeting somewhere, before twelve in the day—three weeks to-morrow."

Once again Helen stopped. A gate had stood at one time across the road trending slowly downwards towards the cluster of red-roofed cottages before them. The white gate-posts were still in their places at the road side, and against one of them Helen leaned, faint and trembling.

"Major Carstairs," she said, very low. "I'm putting myself terribly into your power—and I have very little reason to trust you——"

He cut viciously at his riding boot, staring down with real distress in the eyes that would not meet hers.

"Miss Thorneycroft, I'll say anything that ever you want me to. I swear by all that I ever held sacred, by any oath you care to put to me, for I can quite understand that my word as a gentleman has lost its value, that you may rely on me here—to the utmost! I—I—good God, up to now I always was a decent fellow. It takes a man some little time to learn to be the villain you think me."

"You have—three weeks——"

"And you don't know how much further I may have got in three weeks?" with a twist of his mouth that might have been either a smile or a spasm. "Well, neither do I—and that's the truth. But I think I can promise you I shan't have got—to those lengths."

"Then——"

She could say no more. The dread foe whose acquaintance she had made the night before, loomed darkly before her again, and she would literally rather have died than be worsted by him now. Carstairs glanced at her, he both saw and appreciated that desperate fight for self-control. He did not speak again until they reached a place where the road forked, one branch leading down to the shore, the other rising

and crossing a bridge at the head of the ravine, passing Combe Salterton on its way.

"We had better separate here," he suggested quietly. "You can come up by the cliff, you know. And—and if you will ride out to Maldon Edge—to-morrow three weeks——?"

She stood before him, cold and still, listening, and that was all. The fact that she had no intention of shaking hands with him, of giving him "God speed" in any way, was painfully evident.

"There is one thing I should like to say," he went on, flushing darkly, "when—when it is over, I will tell you why I have—disgraced myself in this way."

"You will tell me—everything?"

"You mean about the—the other woman?" Major Carstairs was not without his intuitions. "I will tell you everything."

Suddenly Helen turned.

"Major Carstairs, tell me now!" she implored. "Trust me, I will, I do deserve it! I will forgive you everything, I will do anything in all the world to help you. Don't you see if you—persist—I can never do anything but *hate* you! There must be some other way. Oh, don't—*don't*——"

"There is no other way. If it had been only depending on you I would have trusted you with everything from the first. But it doesn't depend entirely on you, others may—may—circumstances may arise. Do you think I would have driven you into a corner like this if I hadn't been forced?" with sudden passion. "I would give my right hand to be able to do as you ask me. But—it's not a pleasant acknowledgment to make, yet it's true—I daren't, Miss Thorneycroft."

"And I have your full permission to hate you as much as I choose in—in spite of the relationship you are forcing upon me?"

"You would do that anyway," he said sombrely, "I don't see how you can help it."

He turned away. What use was there in saying over again what could only aggravate a situation well-nigh intolerable already? But he turned back again.

"Don't be too hard upon me," he pleaded rapidly, almost humbly, "I'm behaving badly enough, God knows, but I'm not quite the brute you are thinking me!"

Then he raised his cap and was gone.

## CHAPTER IX

**H**ELEN did not see Major Carstairs again. She kept her room for the remainder of the day, prostrated, or so she assured Anita, with headache, and in the evening Major Carstairs received the usual telegram, summoning him to town, on urgent business, early next day. Anita regarded the situation with intelligence; such little events possessed their own significance.

"There's something the matter," she told Philip with calm conviction, sitting on the arm of his chair and trying the effect of his *pince-nez* on her own small nose as she spoke. "It's generally a proposal, but I'm not inclined to that view this time. For one thing I think if he had proposed Helen would have accepted him——"

"Do you?"

"Why, yes, dear, any one, except you, would have seen that."

"I certainly didn't."

"Well, but you know, dear, you never see anything!" dropping a kiss like a roseleaf on the top of his head. "So as it isn't a proposal it must be a quarrel. I wonder what it is about. It's something serious, Helen wouldn't cry herself ill for nothing."

"Has she cried herself ill?"

"You should just see her," with emphasis. "She won't be fit to be seen for days. I shall be glad when the man is gone."

"So shall I," said Beresford slowly, "if he has vexed Helen. Yet I should hesitate to believe Carstairs would give real cause for offence. I always liked him."

"I think he is—a little bit queer—sometimes, dear, don't you?"

"Queer! Well, perhaps he has been, but this business of poor L'Estrange's death has upset us all a little this week. I think we've all been queer."

"Not so queer as Major Carstairs," said Anita softly. "Funny it should happen after she wore that ring, isn't it, Phil."

"Oh, don't be silly," said Beresford. The idea was in his own mind, and it is not pleasant to have one's absurdities dragged to light.

"Well, but isn't it?"

Beresford did not answer. The last word was necessary to Anita's peaceful existence and he knew it. The next morning, after an early breakfast, Major Carstairs departed, presumably on his way to London. If he ever got so far his journey back must have been a record one, for between two and three in the afternoon he might have been seen writing a letter in a private sitting-room at the "Blue Lion," a comfortable hostelry whose roomy buildings took up nearly all one side of the Trentborough market-place. He had decided that the presence of a stranger in Trentborough was less likely to attract notice than in any of the villages round, and as he was twelve miles from Combe Salterton the chance of being seen and recognised by any of his friends there was so small that he could safely ignore it. Besides he did not intend to stay there. To pay for his rooms and leave his luggage in them was, he was assured, quite sufficient. Meanwhile he wrote his letter.

"BLUE LION, TRENTBOROUGH.

"August 22nd, 1893.

"DEAR JOHNNIE,—*I never received your last!* Please remember it. I want you to write and send me the news over again. Post your

letter so that I don't receive it before September 13th. Then I'm coming out to find Madeline, and I want you to stop where you are, if you can, till I do come. Stand by me, old man, I'm in a tight place. I know I can trust you to do just as you are told.—Yours ever,

“KEITH CARSTAIRS.”

It was the day after, in the evening, that Dickie Tiark, forlorn and without the shred of a joke left to comfort himself with, made his way to Anita's side. She eyed him apprehensively, but, as far as she could see, neither pack of cards nor coloured handkerchief threatened her. He might, of course, carry a surreptitious table-knife up his sleeve and an orange in his coat-tail pocket, but somehow he did not look like it. He was as depressing a spectacle as the poor clown dog in a group of performing animals.

“I feel,” he began nervously, unconsciously twisting up his handkerchief into the semblance of a white rabbit as he spoke, “that I ought to go away, Mrs. Beresford, that I must be an awful nuisance, stopping on by myself this way. But I—came to say something to Miss Thorneycroft, and I haven't said it yet.”

Anita beamed upon him suddenly. Her hopes with regard to Dickie and his intentions had languished lately, but at his words they blossomed like a rose.

“Why don't you?” she asked sweetly.

“Well, you see, lately I've been so afraid she—wouldn't listen.”

“He either fears his fate too much or his deserts are small,” quoted Anita with a soothing smile.

“Yes, of course,” said Dickie forlornly, “but then—perhaps they are, you know.”

Anita moved her pretty shoulders almost impatiently. What did it matter when he could gild all his deficiencies over with several thousands a year!

“I—I wouldn't hesitate, if I were you,” she cooed sweetly. “You can't know if you don't try to find out. Helen isn't a girl to be won without wooing. You'll have to ask her plainly, perhaps more than once——” with an eye to eventualities.

Dickie straightened himself suddenly, he looked as if he had never juggled in his life.

“Thank you,” he said under his breath, “I'll—I'll——”

“He'll ask her to-night,” Anita finished for him with a satisfied little nod.

He did. Helen was sitting in the drawing-room in the dusk, looking pale and languid enough to amply justify her plea of headache. Dickie came and sat beside her, drooping inelegantly forward, his hands hanging limply between his knees.

“Miss Thorneycroft,” he began, “I'm going away to-morrow, that is—I'm afraid I shall be obliged to go away to-morrow.”

“Are you?” said Helen. “What for?”

"Because, I'm afraid—you'll hardly care for me to stop, you know, after to-night."

"Shan't I?" the faintest little gleam of amusement in her friendly eyes. "Why?"

Dickie said nothing, filling up the silence by cracking his thumb joints after a fashion that was Helen's pet aversion.

"Don't do that," she said in exactly the same tone of gentle reproof she would have used had he been six instead of six and twenty.

Dickie obeyed, without the faintest trace of embarrassment or resentment.

"You see," he went on drawing a long breath, "there's something I want to say to you. I don't suppose it will make any difference when I have said it, but I've got to say it all the same."

"Don't," Helen sat up hurriedly; "don't say it, Mr. Tiark. I'd rather you didn't, really."

"Then you—you won't."

"I can't!"

"But would you if you could?"

For a moment Helen hesitated painfully. He loved her devotedly, humbly, almost worshipfully; there was in his character, despite his many absurdities, a sincerity, a generosity that she honestly respected; he could offer her that peace which only an abundant endowment with this world's goods will ensure, a peace so few of us can afford to despise. If only it had been possible. But putting her present difficulties and entanglements altogether on one side, it never would have been, and Helen knew it.

"What is the use of making me be cruel to you," she said quickly. "I can't! Isn't that enough, Mr. Tiark?"

He sat silent a moment. He had been so nearly without hope that it could hardly be described as a disappointment, but his pleasant, ugly face, with this new look of patient trouble on it, made Helen's heart ache. How different, oh, how different it was from the proposal she had been forced into accepting twenty-four hours ago. Yet if Keith Carstairs had sat where Dickie was sitting, spoken as Dickie was speaking! The sudden painful thrill of her pulses shocked, positively frightened her. She banished the mental picture with indignation at herself. He, who had proved himself a liar, coward and sneak! He was not capable of feeling as Dickie felt, it was an insult to the better man to put him even in imagination into his place. Dickie's voice roused her.

"May I ask you something?"

"Anything you like."

"Is there—any one else?"

"No one, Mr. Tiark."

The denial was positive, almost passionate. Dickie looked at her with mild eyes, full of pained, regretful questioning.

"You—you haven't any reason to be—offended with any one, have

you?" he asked, and through all his embarrassment Helen felt that he meant to be answered. Her lips parted and whitened.

"Offended with any one? No. Why, what made you think——"

"Well, I wasn't sure about Carstairs. He went a bit suddenly, and you've been ill all day, and—and— Well, Miss Thorneycroft, you've no brother, and you say there is no one else—but—there's always me, you know."

"You are very good, and if ever I have any battles to fight you shall certainly fight them," laying a hand that quivered a little for one moment in his, "but—there's nothing for my knight-errant to do just now, thank you."

He rose a little drearily, and he did not look quite satisfied.

"So you see, I shall have to go to-morrow, after all. I told you so, didn't I?"

"Yes, it's—the only thing, isn't it?" Helen had risen too. "But—come back, Mr. Tiark. I have not so many friends that I can afford to lose one of them."

Her voice was tremulous, her eyes soft, dewy, and affectionate enough to cause him a sharp stab. He managed to smile at her as she stood, her trembling fingers lightly interlaced, before him.

"And—and please put it out of your mind that—Major Carstairs——"

"Certainly, if you tell me to," he answered gravely.

Helen dropped into her chair and hid her face in the cushion on the back with a sick shiver. He was not convinced, and she knew it. Hardly was he gone when Anita came in. She knelt down beside her sister and slipped a coaxing arm about her waist.

"What's the matter, Nell?"

"Dickie has been—talking to me."

"And you've refused him?" with a resigned sigh. "Well, of course, I guessed you would; but it's a pity. That's not the only thing, Nell."

Helen was silent. Anita went on.

"I wouldn't fret this way, ducksie, if I were you. He'll come back again."

Miss Thorneycroft turned slowly, putting her sister's arm from about her waist.

"Fret which way? Who'll come back again?"

"Major Carstairs. Now, Nell, don't be silly; the thing's plain. You've quarrelled about something ridiculous, and the man has gone off in a huff. But he'll come back again; I saw more than you did. He's fonder of you than you think he is!"

Helen listened in stunned silence. Was all the world in league to torture her with Major Carstairs?"

"And you think I am fretting—because Major Carstairs has gone away? Nan, I despise him, I loathe him, I hate him! If only I could be positive that I need never, *never* see him again——"



"Yes, dear, yes; but if I were you I wouldn't say so!"—sympathetic but reproving. "He can't possibly have done anything to make you feel so, and everybody knows what it means when a girl talks like that, you know."

Helen was silent, horribly ashamed and bitterly indignant. Up to now it had been probable, sometimes imminent that she would release herself from Keith Carstairs' hold, and tell all the shameful tale to those whose help she had a right to claim. But not now. Her delicate shrinking from the intolerable position with which he had been coward enough to threaten her, from the unendurable reawakening of Mrs. MacArthur's enmity, would be incomprehensible to Anita. The latter would think she had yielded easily, perhaps without sufficient excuse. She would perhaps even dare to suggest—

Helen hid her face again with a tighter hold upon her resolve than ever. Anything, anything was easier to bear—so it seemed in her condition of strained excitement—than the chatter, the excitement, the weighing of possible motives, the doubt as to the exact truth, that would be her portion if a hint of the present position reached Anita. And both Anita and Philip liked Carstairs. They would be almost as unwilling to believe evil of him as of Helen, perhaps more unwilling, seeing that Helen had been accused of the same thing before. Besides, what difference would it make to her that a purely formal tie existed between herself and Keith Carstairs? She would, of course, be condemned to perpetual old-maiden-hood, but to a girl to whom the men of her acquaintance are all her very good friends and all pretty much alike, such a fate does not offer much ground for self-pity. No, she would go through this farce of a marriage, upon which Major Carstairs insisted, for some unexplained reason, as so necessary to his peace of mind, and then she would never hear of him again.

The days went by steadily, neither lagging nor hurrying, and the twelfth of September came this year exactly the same as it comes other years. It was not surprising that Helen should ride out alone this morning, she rode out alone every morning, having from the first emancipated herself, in spite of Philip's scandalised protests, from the nightmare of a groom trotting at her heels. She had even ridden out to Malden Edge before, that she might accustom herself to the journey and avoid remark when she rode that way again, but other days there had not been a quiet horseman waiting for her in the shadow of a group of rocks that crowned a rise, and was a landmark for miles around. His eyes flashed when he saw her, taking her horse slowly and easily up the steep, white road. He was very pale, as well he might be. He had secured his safety, as far as lay in his power, by what he knew were inexcusable means, but until he saw Helen, and that close enough to read the expression of her face, he had never been sure of the success of them. And the adjourned inquest was fixed for the fourteenth!

He bowed as she neared him, and the two rode on quietly side by

side, the horses jingling their bits and enjoying companionship. Helen did not speak, she could not, and she kept her face steadily averted. Never since primeval man felled his chosen fair with a blow of his fist, and dragged her off by her hair to adorn his arboreal dwelling, had there been a ceremony in which prehistoric physical methods had been more closely carried out by moral force, and the entire success of primitive measures left them both aghast and astounded. The silence grew intolerable. Carstairs broke it.

"It will be as well for us not to ride into Trentborough, it attracts so much notice. I have a small phaeton waiting—just outside the town."

The sound of his voice brought a wave of colour over Helen's pale face. Her heart rose against him in a hot resentment that left her feeling nauseated and morally relaxed in every fibre.

"I am here to fulfil my part of the bargain," she said very low. "If you will be so kind as—not to compel me—to discuss details."

He bowed again, flushing hotly.

"I hope you may find it—the bargain—a less painful one than you imagine," he answered quickly.

Helen's mouth set bitterly. He might at least spare her polite speeches, and this, of course, was nothing but a polite speech. The horses were descending now, picking their way cautiously, for the steep road was stony and deeply scored with ruts, and the little grey town of Trentborough lay before them. Carstairs glanced at Helen again as they dismounted at the roadside inn, where the phaeton awaited them. He was almost morbidly anxious not to attract attention, but nothing could have been quieter than her perfectly fitting habit of brown cloth, with its white corduroy waistcoat and row of tiny flat gold buttons. Her brown felt hat, plainly, almost severely adorned by a ribbon and a quill, was as suitable for driving as riding, and for walking as either. Of course there was no effacing a certain air about her that for want of a better word we call distinguished, and that would certainly attract notice anywhere; but nothing could have been better chosen than her dress. It filled Major Carstairs, in spite of his shame at his own behaviour and his unreasonable anger at the way she had taken it, with a certain satisfaction. So, also, did the conviction that had suddenly dawned upon his mind, that, had Helen not been entirely heart-whole and fancy free, she could never have sat beside him as she sat now, as he drove the little phaeton into Trentborough. Considering that the ceremony they were about to go through together was to his certain knowledge the hollowest of shams, that the tie that was to bind them would fall away in dust and ashes at the first touch of the little flame of truth he had every intention of applying during the next few days, the conviction afforded him a peculiarly illogical contentment.

The little grey square was almost deserted as they stopped at the corner. Two carts laden with seaweed were passing across, an old woman with a shawl over her head was drawing water from the pump

in the middle, a boy was lounging at the door of a sleepy little shop.

"Go straight in," said Carstairs quietly, pointing out a house with wire blinds and a brass plate on the door at the corner of the square, "I'll follow you in a moment."

Helen went obediently, though it seemed as though she were walking in a kind of waking nightmare. The registrar was cool and business-like. Marrying people was part of his daily work, and, as a single glance assured his practised eye that this was a union influenced by other considerations than love, he went glibly through the prescribed formula and tied the knot as quickly and as securely as possible. It hardly seemed five minutes, in reality it was about a quarter of an hour, before Helen stood once again in the sunshine falling across the little grey square, an unfamiliar gold band on her finger, a folded paper held lightly in her hand.

She slipped that unfamiliar gold band from her finger the instant the door was closed, and had to master a wild impulse to fling it with all her strength out into the sunshine, before she could control herself sufficiently to hand it to Major Carstairs with a gesture that compelled his genuine admiration, though all the pride and scorn of it were for him.

"And those?" he said, with a quiet questioning glance at the folded paper in her hand.

She gave it him promptly. What was it, she wondered, and why did he say "those" and not "that"?

"We will walk on, if you please."

A touch of nervousness and hurry in his manner betrayed itself, and conveyed to her that it was better they should not stand on the step of the registrar's office to make any further arrangements. They did not speak again until they were once more before the little roadside inn where they had left their horses. He glanced at the particularly unprepossessing specimen of ostlerdom, dirty, ragged and villainous-looking, that was leading them out.

"You will let me mount you," he said quickly.

Helen acquiesced, in the quiet, dreamy way in which she had done everything during this unreal, dreamy day. He put her up quickly and skilfully, and stood a moment with his hand on her bridle.

"I must ask you to let me see you somewhere—some time to-day."

"To-night. Philip and Anita—are out to dinner."

"Shall I come up to the house?"

"No, oh no! The summer-house—at the bottom of the garden."

"Very well."

"And it is to be—only once. You promised!" in a quick reproachful undertone as she read dissent in his face.

He bit his lip savagely at her tone. Would she hate him like this always?—*after* what he had to tell her?

"Twice. I must see you again after the fourteenth. I must, Miss Thorneycroft!"

She could have blessed him for the name. If only he had known how she had been shrinking, quivering under the fear that he would call her something else! He saw the relief in her face, though, with true masculine density, he had no idea what brought it there.

"And that is—the last time."

"That is—as you shall wish."

She flashed a quick, almost terrified look at him.

"You know what I shall wish," she said, her voice passionate and low.

"So be it, then," he answered quietly.

He watched her as she rode away, watched her till she was only a dark speck across the sea of purple heather. He was grateful to her, from the bottom of his heart he admired her, she had gone through a supremely difficult experience in such a manner as to win his keenest approbation. Major Carstairs was not a man given to analysing his own feelings; but he sighed unconsciously as he swung himself into his saddle and cantered off in the opposite direction.

Helen went through the rest of the day in a sort of mist. She ate her luncheon, and had tea with Anita, in peignoir and slippers, in the pretty octagon room upstairs, and helped her sister to dress afterwards, as she had helped her scores of times before. But when Anita would have had the arrangement of her golden coils altered for the third time, convinced once more that Pauline's patient arrangement did not "suit her," Helen protested.

"Nan, you haven't time. Oh, do, for mercy's sake, get done and go!"

"What for?" asked Anita, with wide blue eyes.

"Philip is waiting and the carriage is coming round."

But it was not that that made her voice shake and her hands tremble in her eagerness to speed Anita on her dainty way. It was the thought of a quiet figure waiting in the dusk of the little rustic summer-house, and of what he might have to say. Yet, left alone, both courage and composure forsook her suddenly, and a fit of nervous trembling ended in a burst of wild tears. But they were soon over. With a steady hand she crushed down her agitation, and, going slowly over to the cheval-glass, she stood a long, long minute studying the stormy eyes and tear-stained face she saw therein.

"I know why you are crying," she told the reflection in the liquid depths before her; "you are crying because it isn't *different*—as it might have been. You fool, oh, you fool!"

(To be continued)

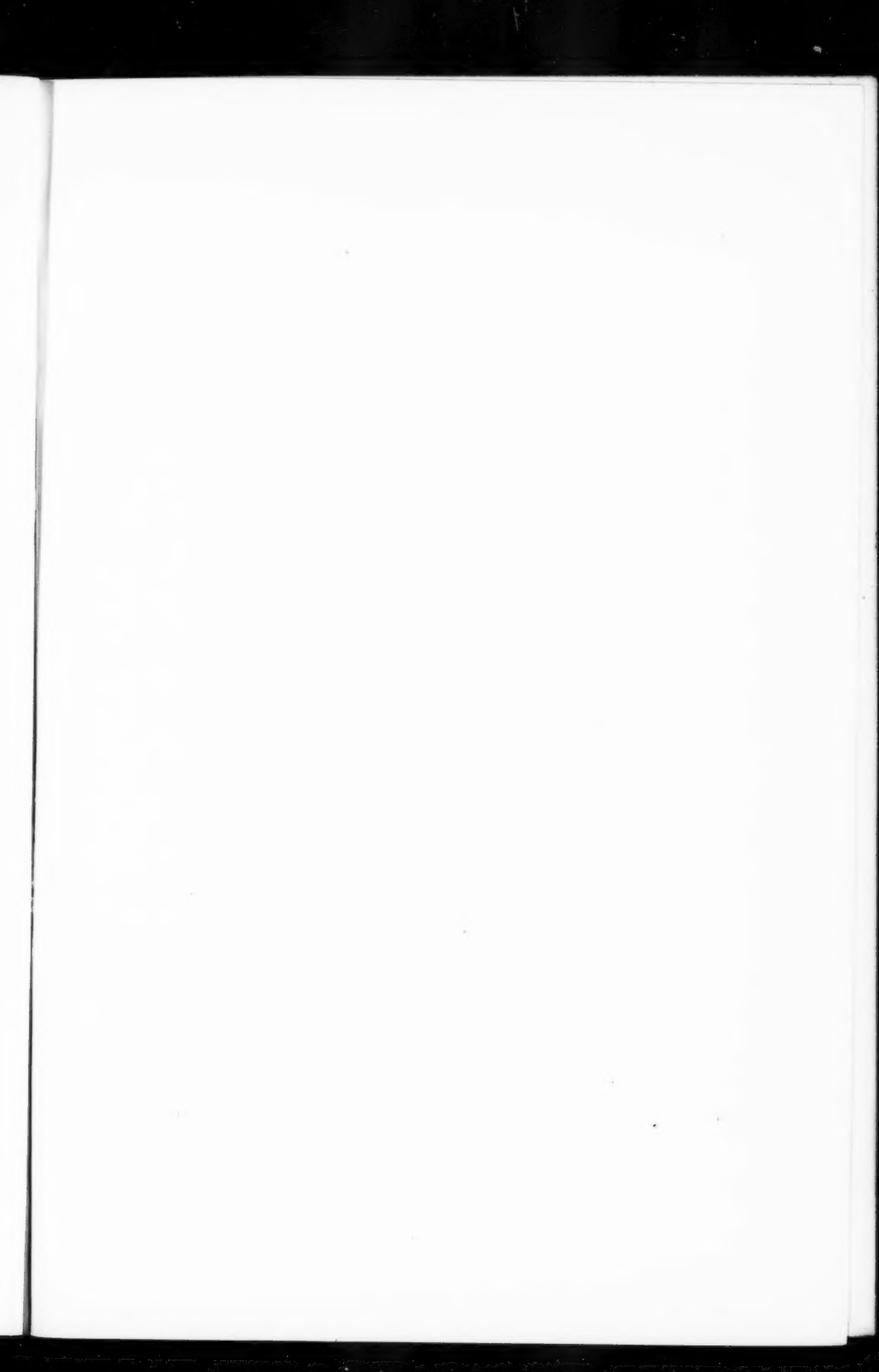
## JOHN RUSKIN AS ARTIST

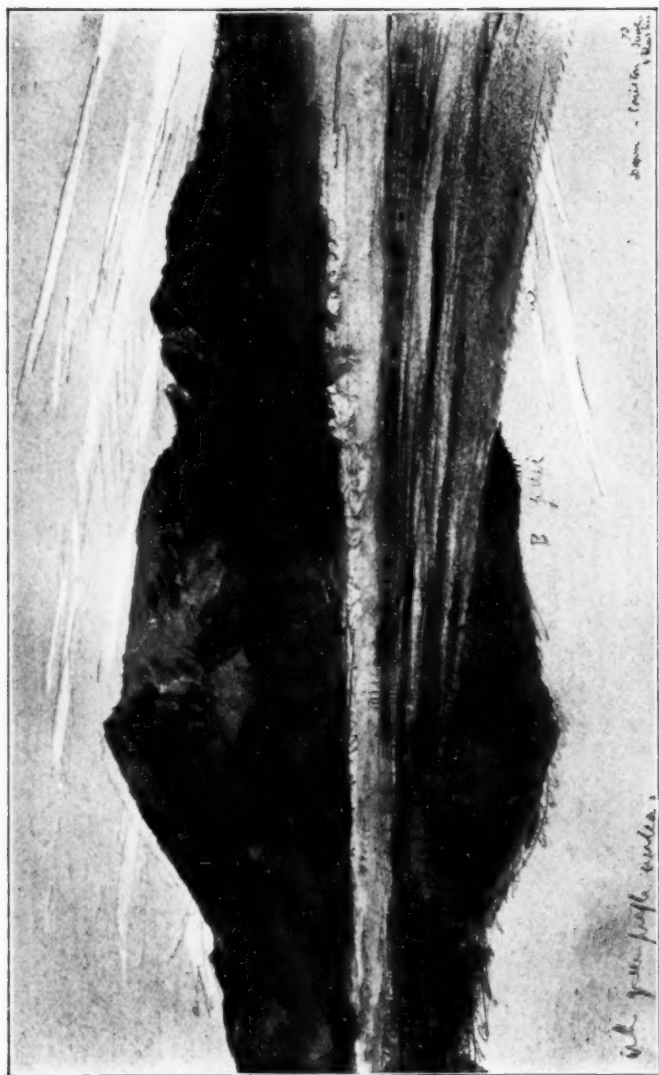
FOR the first time during last month the public had an opportunity to judge of John Ruskin the artist, as distinct from John Ruskin the writer. It was fitting that the exhibition should be arranged by the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours, of which Ruskin, greatly to his delight, was made an honorary member in 1873. As author he is widely known, not alone by those interested in the domains of thought and activity of which he made especial study, but by those who find pleasure in writing, on whatever subject, which as writing is excellent. At his best, Ruskin played upon the instrument of language as the skilled harpist on his strings. In impassioned mood, each word was to him as a note of music, calling for its complement, its restorative contrast, its apt sequence—in brief, for its inheritance. He could be now triumphant, now poignant, now sweetly melodious, ever weaving and re-weaving to rare issues our native tongue, creating out of the common stuff of language periods of incommunicable beauty. Of this all cultivated folk are conscious; but of Ruskin the draughtsman, the colourist, the public till now has had scant knowledge. Drawings and etchings from his hand are reproduced, it is true, in "Modern Painters;" and in "Stones of Venice," to take but one more instance, he represents some of the architectural details which kindled his enthusiasm, and of which he has left us vivid word-pictures. But to estimate aright the worth of a drawing, the original, and not a reproduction, however good, must be seen. Save to a limited number of connoisseurs, then, the exhibition of more than four hundred pencil and water-colour drawings, and etchings, came with much of the force, the freshness of a revelation.

In general, Ruskin is regarded as an amateur in art, and this is so in a restricted sense. Primarily a critic, he did not desire to appear as an exhibitor, nor did he sell his drawings. On the other hand, as Mr. W. G. Collingwood says in his prefatory note to the catalogue, "Looking over the hundreds of sketches he has left, beside scores of highly elaborated drawings and carefully prepared plates, and books of detailed memoranda, one is really inclined to wonder how he found time to be a writer." But even bearing in mind the dictum that genius consists in an infinite capacity to take pains, it cannot be maintained that the amount of time and energy devoted to the practice of art determines whether or not a man shall be an artist. Without the vision, the instinct, the swift response to what is significant and beautiful, labour is well-nigh in vain. Again and again we are told that Ruskin executed his drawings, not as an end in themselves, but in order to acquire exact

knowledge of facts of nature, or as records of this piece of architecture, that sky effect; moreover, that there is not a picture among them. With whatever intent he worked as a draughtsman—and one can hardly question the statements on this point made by those who knew him well—it is impossible to assent to the final proposition. A picture must be self-contained, complete, no mere fragment taken at haphazard out of its surroundings and set down, however adequately; it is a composition, not a compilation, the unifying principle cannot be absent. But can it seriously be maintained that Ruskin did not achieve as much? Are there not some—many, even—of his drawings that sustain the test? If not, it would be interesting to know wherein exactly they fail. In a poem of rare insight Browning says that in moments of profoundest feeling every man would fain “put to proof art alien to the artist’s;” if he write, he would paint a picture; if he paint, he would write a poem. I am by no means convinced that now and again at least Ruskin did not express himself more perfectly, did not reveal his passion for the beautiful more completely, in painting than in words. But however this may be, the distinction with which he worked, alike in words and with pencil or brush, separate him from all save one or two of his fellows of the nineteenth century. Two men with whom in this respect we may associate him leap to mind. The poems of William Blake are charged, now with a simplicity, now with a mystery, unsurpassed in the language; his drawings are those of a man who discerned the invisible. Dante Gabriel Rossetti praised beauty with voice and hand: writing the matchless sonnets, painting pictures, such as the unfinished yet in no sense fragmentary “Passover,” in which Ruskin took keen delight.

In order to illustrate this dual power, attention may be directed to Ruskin’s pencil drawing of the Market Place, Abbeville, executed in 1868, one of the fine examples of his work in the possession of the University of Oxford. It is called a study for detail, but it is just because the representation of detail is subordinated to general effect, and this without sacrifice of fidelity, that the Abbeville ranks with the most beautiful renderings of architecture in our time. A passage from Ruskin’s lecture on “Flamboyant Architecture” may be cited, as at once explanatory of the spirit of the scene and as an instance of an intimately rendered impression by means of language: “A fellowship of ancient houses set beside each other, with all the active companionship of business and sociableness of old friends, and yet . . . each with its own character and fearlessly independent ways—its own steep gable, narrow or wide—its special little peaked windows set this way and that as the fancy took them—its most particular old corners, and outs and ins of wall, to make the most of the ground and sunshine—its own turret staircase, in the inner angle of the courtyard—its own designs and fancies in carving of bracket and beam.” The artist-writer once stated that he was no poet, that he was destitute of imagination. This was too humble an estimate. The Abbeville drawing,





*John Ruskin*

DAWN : CONISTON  
JUNE 1873

*From the Drawing in the possession of Mr. GEORGE ALLEN*

*Swan Electric Engraving Co.*



based as it is on fact—the buildings so faithfully represented, indeed, that an architect told the writer any competent man could reconstruct them without further aid—is shaped by the imagination. Not otherwise could selection so unerringly just have been made, not otherwise could the work have been charged with the personality of the man. As it seems to me, it is just because the material was, consciously or unconsciously, wrought to pictorial beauty, this part left out, that emphasised, the space in the foreground void save for the two groups of baskets and sacks, it is just because the imagination was operative in the shaping of the material that we find in the drawing a charm so potent. The word-description, one of a thousand such that might be quoted, although marred here and there, tells of fine perception, of eyes that looked out eagerly, passionately on the world, of one who never lost something of the wondering worship of a child.

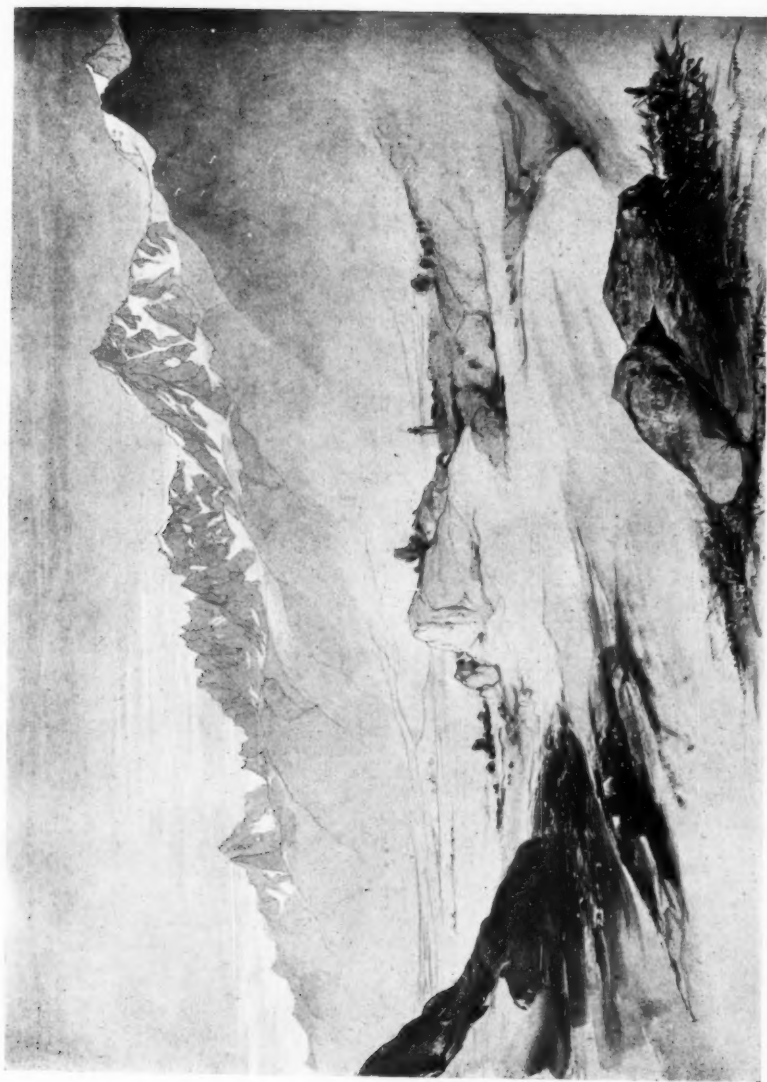
Let us take a case in which the word-picture surpasses in beauty, in significance, the water-colour with which we may associate it. From his study window at Brantwood Ruskin would lift his eyes to the Coniston fells. In the summer of 1873 he made a drawing of an effect at dawn, when the rose-crowned hills stood against the eastern sky, "imaged in the lake in quietly reversed and perfect similitude." It is tenderly felt, but it lacks the lyrical inspiration of the following words, written at Brantwood in February 1878: "Morning breaks as I write, along those Coniston fells, and the level mists, motionless and grey beneath the rose of the moorlands, veil the lower woods, and the sleeping village, and the long lawns by the lake shore. Oh that some one had but told me, in my youth, when all my heart seemed to be set on these colours and clouds, that appear for a little while and then vanish away, how little my love of them would serve me when the silence of lawn and wood in the dews of the morning should be completed, and all my thoughts should be of those whom, by neither, I was to meet more!" It is hardly matter for surprise that while for the most part Ruskin is acclaimed as a great writer, there should be those who deride his literary works and extol his pictures. The truth is that, temperamentally and by training, he had keenest apprehension of beauty, and if the best of his writings be compared with the best of his drawings there would be some difficulty in determining to which the higher place should be assigned.

Of the thousand attempts that have been made to define art, onward from that of Aristotle, who held that it is a certain state of mind, apt to make, when joined with true reason, few contain more of truth—that many-faceted jewel whose shafts of light can never be re-focused by a single intellect—than the saying of Carlyle that art is the dis-impri-soned soul of fact. If this definition be applied to Ruskin's pencil drawing of one side of the Grand Canal at Venice, it will be found alike interpretative and interpreted. The sketch, one of those "given up in despair," was lent by the Oxford University. The Venice of Ruskin is not that of Turner. The wings of Turner's

imagination, so to say, beat furiously against the stern wall of fact, and invested the queen of cities with an atmosphere of vision. Ruskin, on the other hand, with his love of scientific accuracy, approaches the study of the palace-flanked waterway with utmost reverence for detail. But when he comes to represent a succession of these glorious palace fronts, receding to a vanishing point far away, the artist in him becomes assertive. He felt rather than reasoned that if the particular was not sacrificed to the general, the soul of the scene would vanish. As it is, so fine are the gradations that detail seems to ebb away, as does colour from the sky when the sun has set. If the buildings of a fading past could find voice, surely they would desire to be perpetuated as Ruskin has perpetuated them in the drawings of Abbeville and of the Grand Canal. Individually, none loses its charm—their idiosyncrasies, their quips and cranks and quaint lines, their atmosphere clinging to roof and window and doorway, are rendered; at the same time, each is seen as one of a company, joined together for purposes of convenience, of safety, not least of beauty. In fine, the drawings are faithful to the spirit as well as to the letter of the scenes they represent. If these works be “mere records,” an assumption impossible to uphold, then many picture-lovers will wish for more examples in the same “humble” kind.

In the domain of still life, Ruskin admired the work of no man more than that of William Hunt. There were exhibited in Pall Mall several examples in this kind by the artist-critic, among others, drawings of a crab, of shells and minerals, of fruit and flowers, and of a single little feather. Colour in this last is sparingly used; pearl-greys predominate, with touches of brown and black for the delicate flecks. Here, again, what may have been an instinctive impulse beautifully to express that which he desired to record, aided by delicacy of hand and eye, yield a delightful result. It is not as with so many of Hunt's works, which leave us unmoved because of the detachment of the object from its environment, because, as it were, it has been ruthlessly plucked from its relationships. No less heed is paid to minute markings, but the drawing, by means of its faint background, the subtle treatment throughout, is truly and sensitively knit. More in the manner of Hunt, less informed by the pictorial verities, is the study of an apple; the sense for richness of colour running through much of Ruskin's prose is here not perfectly controlled.

If Ruskin loved architecture deeply, he loved nature with an even more abiding passion. Time and again he “left off beaten” or “tired” in his attempt to be faithful to those worlds of detail from which the great universe is formed. To count and engrave each of the innumerable pines on a Swiss hillside, to reveal in picture the minute markings of each crag, is beyond the power of a human being. Ruskin the man of science would have accomplished it if he could, but his health failed him. In a work like the “Pine Forest on Mont Cenis,” and in not a few others, the scientific aim is dominant. The

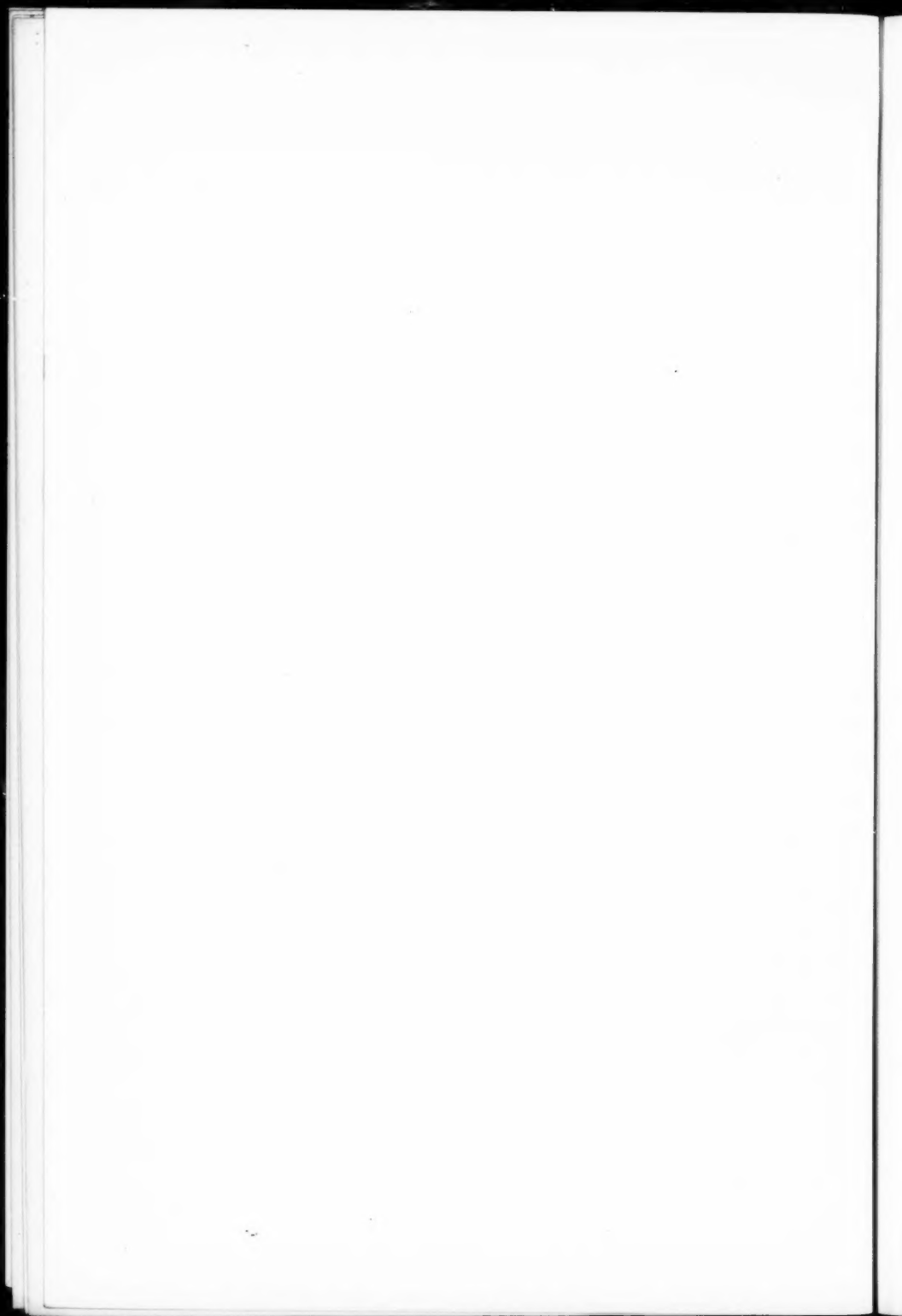


*John Ruskin*

CHAMONIX

*From the Drawing now in the possession of R. E. CUNLIFFE, Esq.*

*Vauz & Crauplon*



drawing conveys a sense of the solidity of the hill, of the delicate beauty of pine-tops seen against sky or snow. It is as though we had looked through a field-glass and admired detail after detail of the landscape. What it lacks, despite the surety of structure, is the unifying personal element, that quality without which no work can have a restorative, life-enhancing appeal. The scientific realists of early Florentine art thought to analyse existent forms, and so to build up an indestructible formula of drawing. They failed for the reason that nature is too complex wholly to be analysed; moreover, art is concerned rather with the spirit of reality than with reality itself.

In like manner it must be admitted that some of Ruskin's drawings give colour to the sweeping assertion that all are mere records of fact. Examples that come within this class were executed, surely, when the artist in him lay dormant, when the man of science triumphed. It is not so with the pencil-drawing of "Lucerne from above," made in 1866 as "an elementary illustration of landscape." Here suggestion replaces the intent to render details, and the result is proportionately more satisfying. In a water-colour undertaken as a study of rocks and lichens in the glen below Les Montets, in the ascent to Chamonix, we have an instance of the extent to which Ruskin's aim—here, apparently, the transcript of certain details in the foreground—was deflected, unconsciously it may be, by his insatiable quest of beauty. The rocks, with sprays trailing over them this way and that in happy perversity, are structural; no shadow of violence has been done to the massive nature of these rocks, to the delicate forms of the lichens. Yet this is not the most beautiful portion of the work. In the fold of the hill behind lies atmosphere of deep violet, enveloping the valley with the hush of a beautiful presence; and farther off the mountains raise their jagged summits in awesome majesty, dominating by their aspect of eon-long persistence this little corner of the world. Other instances might be cited to disprove the theory that Ruskin's vision of the world embraced only its countless and infinitely intricate details—details which none but nature can compose into a great unity. We find glorious sunset effects, subtly gradated; studies of shore and sky and sea at Seascale, one or two of which might at first sight be mistaken for the work of Mr. Brabazon, so entirely was Ruskin concerned with broad effects of colour, so little with minutiae of form. Perhaps pre-eminently when he elected to represent, as in the drawing belonging to Sir J. Simon, the cornice and heads of columns at St. Mark's; still water, as in "Lucerne Bridge," on whose surface of opalescent blue, in whose translucent deeps, forms are imaged, transmuted to new subtlety; or in a different kind the front of the Fondaco de' Turchi, Venice, the sombre reds of roof and brick concentrated in a stronger passage of colour on the balcony, he gives us not so much actuality as an impression of actuality filtered through, rarefied by the temperament of a veritable seer.

Sir Edward Poynter once said of Ruskin that he was "ignorant of the practical side of art," a hasty judgment that he must long ago have regretted. Furthermore, it was declared that "of beauty of form he seems to have no perception whatever." While these criticisms cannot be justified, the art of Ruskin, apart from the defect of the dissection as opposed to the re-creation of scenes and objects, had its well-defined limitations. It has been said, and not unwisely, that in the human figure threads of every type of world-beauty are to be found interwoven; that man, formed on the sixth day, reflects in himself the glories of the universe, besides possessing the subtle something that differentiates him from all else. Ruskin either could not or did not care to interpret the poetry of the human figure. He was pre-occupied with other things. He affirmed that "the painting of landscape requires not only more industry, but far greater delicacy of bodily sense and faculty, than average figure-painting. Any common sign-painter can paint the landlord's likeness, and with a year or two's scraping with chalk at Kensington, any cockney student can be got to draw effectively enough for public taste a straddling gladiator or a curly-pated Adonis. But to give the slightest resemblance to, or notion of, such a piece of mountain, wild-wood, or falling stream as these, in this little leap of the Tees in Turner's drawing, needs an eagle's keenness of eye, fineness of finger like a trained violinist's, and patience and love like Griselda's or Lady Jane Grey's." This was one of many outbursts which holds little of reason in it. It is beside the point to say that desultory training fits a man successfully to appeal to public taste in the domain of figure-painting. A chasm no less deep divides the work in this kind of a Giorgione, a Titian, a Rembrandt, a Velasquez, from that of the "cockney student," than that which divides a trivial landscape from one by Turner.

Two or three studies of women's heads exhibited in Pall Mall show that Ruskin hardly rose above the commonplace in rendering the human form. Again, his power lay in the direction of interpretation rather than of original design. He was too profoundly conscious, perhaps, of the unfathomable beauties in nature and in the art of others to attempt himself to add to their number, save as an interpreter. "I can no more write a story than compose a picture," he tells us in "*Præterita*;" and although he once undertook to design a window, so little did he trust his faculty of invention that he handed the work over to a friend. A third of his limitations—and a limitation is not of necessity a blemish—is that he practically never attempted to work in oils. In one of his Oxford lectures he made "the positive statement . . . that oil-painting is the art of arts; that it is sculpture, drawing, and music all in one, involving the technical dexterities of those three several arts—that is to say, the decision and strength of the stroke of the chisel; the balanced distribution of appliance of that force necessary for graduation in light and shade; and the passionate felicity of rightly multiplied actions, all unerring, which on an in-



*John Ruskin*

THUN. SWITZERLAND

*Faus & Crampton*





strument produce right sound, and on canvas, living colour. There is no other human skill so great or so wonderful as the skill of fine oil painting." His boyish love of water-colours—did he not delight in the "skyometer" of his own making, whereby he matched the elusively beautiful passages of colour in the sky at various times of the day, and in varying conditions?—did not extend to the sterner medium. At the age of fifteen, in one of the many humorous verse-letters to his father, he wrote:

"I cannot bear to paint in oil,  
C. Fielding's tints alone for me!  
The other costs me double toil,  
And wants some fifty coats to be  
Splashed on each spot successively."

Mr. Collingwood tells us that in his later years Ruskin used to say that the "practical reason why he never went on with oil-painting was that he had to draw, and to keep his drawings among books and papers, and oils were messy and did not smell nice." But as we do not demand of a musician that he shall play upon more than one instrument, neither can we reasonably demand of an artist that he shall work in oils as well as in water-colour. Let each man select his fittest method of expression and develop it to the utmost of his ability.

The exhibition of original drawings in Pall Mall, as I apprehend, has demonstrated to the world that Ruskin as an artist was not the mere imitator of George Cruikshank, of Copley Fielding, of Samuel Prout, of David Roberts, of Turner, although he came successively under the influence of each of these, but, in his best period and in his best moods, was an artist who discerned and expressed in individual way beauties unseen by others. Thus has he aided us towards fuller vision, thus added to the world's heritage of beauty.

FRANK RINDER.

## LA TOMBOLA

O nata da una zingana,  
 O fia de una Regina,  
 El cuor t'ha dito Bianca,  
 E ti ga dà del "ti!"—

OLD VENETIAN SONG.

THE wet, dreary winter has vanished, and Venice awakes from the cold and discomfort which becomes her so badly. Once more the sun pours his hot kisses on the grey old palaces that arise, stately and beautiful, out of the tremulous waters.

Each year finds them a little more sad, a shade greyer and older, but with their beauty unimpaired.

Now the melancholy silence of the last few months disappears all at once, and with the return of spring the Venetians come forth joyfully to live out of doors.

Harmony and laughter are heard on the canals. Exquisite, wavy Italian voices mingle with guitar arpeggios, and the sweet, fluttering notes of the mandoline. Its music always seems to me something between the flight of a butterfly and the dancing of a sunbeam.

Love and romance glide by my windows every evening in the procession of gondolas passing and re-passing on the Grand Canal.

I listen to the distant music, and the mellow voices of the gondoliers are wafted up to me from the canals round the corner. "Premi" (to the right), "Stai" (to the left) sound like the tones of a deep-mouthed bell.

And then I, too, begin to feel the spring beating in my pulses. I want to be in the movement; to seize a little of the charm of Venice, and make it into something tangible, as far as my poor powers will allow, to remind me of her enchantment when I am far away. It is with something akin to elation that I stretch a canvas, and scrape a palette clean.

I wait for a moment on the riva while the padrone lifts his voice, "Poppè, Poppè!"

His cry brought a gondola quickly to my feet, and, as the solitary occupant pulled off his red cap with a spirited grace, giving me a flashing smile, and a pleasant "Buona sera, signora," the foundation of a friendship was laid.

My gondolier took possession of me from that hour.

He was little more than a boy. His eyes were black, and his face was brown, with aquiline features that gave the profile the clearness of a cameo.

He told me that his name was Antonio Moro, and that he came of a long line of gondoliers. Father, brother, grandfather, uncles, all followed the same calling.

He soon discovered that I was "simpatica," and gave me many strange confidences when we were alone.

The memory of those drowsy spring days on the lagoons and waterways of Venice comes back to me now with an infinite longing and regret. It was a delight to glide along, often in silence, in the languid afternoon towards Chioggia, where the water is the colour of opals, returning at sunset to drink in the beauty of a land, sea and sky bathed in glory. In the far distance one could see the Euganean Hills, like a dream of the Delectable Mountains; while, crossing and re-crossing "our golden path of rays," the fishing-boats come home, dipping to the water's edge. The sails, strangely decorated with stars and triangles, shading from the deepest chocolate to pale yellow, harmonised with the ever-changing colours of the landscape.

A little later in the season my work required that I should spend some hours every day in the neighbourhood of San Maria Formosa. Here Tonio would wait patiently for me by the riva until I had finished painting, or perhaps he would go to sleep under the shadow of the bridge close by.

I observed that our way to the Formosa was always and unnecessarily the same; up a peculiarly dirty and noisome canal, where crumbling palaces were peopled by the poor. Fluttering garments flew aloft, drying in the sun, and from the carved balconies, where once noble ladies leaned out to listen to a lover's serenade, dishevelled matrons shouted noisy gossip to their neighbours across the way, with rapid tongues that never ceased.

The place reeked of unwholesomeness and squalor.

I suggested to Tonio that there were other canals cleaner and more interesting, by which we could reach our destination quite as easily.

"If the Signora wills it," replied he, deferentially; and skilfully turned the slender boat into another channel.

But in a day or two we had drifted back to our old haunts. In the gondola I generally sat facing Tonia for the sake of the pure artistic pleasure I derived from watching him. His slender figure was long and shapely in the limb, and the lithe grace of his movements as he guided his craft never palled on me.

Therefore it is not surprising that I noticed, when we passed one old palace, Tonia would lingeringly scan its sculptured windows, with a faint expression of expectancy on his features.

One evening the mystery was solved. A rose dropped into my lap, and looking up, I saw a girl on the balcony whose beauty took my breath away.

Grey eyes, set like the Madonna's, smiled down upon us, and an aureole of auburn hair flamed gorgeously in the setting sun. The pale face, in its calm purity of outline, might have served Bellini or Palma

as model for the Blessed Virgin. The girl was like an exquisite flower growing in a ruin where everything else is dead.

"Ah, my gondolier," said I, "now I know why we always come through this canal. Who is the Biondina bella? Your betrothed?"

The warm colour showed in the clear bronze of his cheeks.

"Sì, Madama. It is Bianca Marconi. We love each other, but alas! we may not marry yet, perhaps never."

He sighed, and as we passed out into the brilliant sunlight that flooded the Grand Canal and made the golden ball of the Custom House like fire, I saw that the habitual brightness of his face had changed to melancholy.

Soon the poverino told me all his little story.

With passionate tenderness he dwelt on his love for the Biondina, who was already seventeen, but, unhappily had no dower. Her people were not on the same social level as Tonio's. The padrone was a facchino, and what you call "damn lazy"; he enjoyed playing "mora" on the piazzetta, or sleeping in the sun a great deal better than work. So the padrona had very little for the many children.

Bianca was employed in a lace factory, and the beautiful things she made sometimes went to London, but the soldi she earned only bought polenta and macaroni.

Meanwhile, Bianca had another lover, a terrible person, rich, old and ugly, who was willing to forego the fortune for the sake of the girl's beauty.

Still, they were not without hope, because Bianca, a devout maiden, prayed every morning in San Marco before going to her work.

She vowed to our blessed lady the golden earrings that she wore (her only jewellery) if she would but hear her prayers, and grant success in La Tombola.

The money won thereby would give Bianca the necessary dower, and Tonio's parents would consent to the marriage.

"But Madonna had not yet replied, and more than one Tombola had passed," he concluded, sadly, as he ran the prow of the gondola close to the masts at my landing-stage.

When I first visited Venice I knew no Italian, and the advertisement of La Tombola puzzled me. Whatever it meant, it seemed to be causing a great deal of excitement and interest. Men sat in the piazza, and elsewhere at little tables, selling tickets as fast as they could take the money. La Tombola was printed on swinging cards above their heads. I wondered if it were Italian for acrobatic performance, or perchance it was the name of some gloomy tragedy with the tomb for its theme. I bought a ticket, and in time learned that the mysterious words signified a lottery. It was the name given to the highest of three money prizes. Four thousand lire, seven thousand lire and La Tombola.

The hot days swept onwards towards June, and in the interval I

had met and spoken several times with Bianca. Closer acquaintance found her as sweet and modest as she was beautiful.

Sometimes we saw the girl going home from her work, one of a merry crowd on a bridge as we passed underneath in our gondola. On these occasions she would disengage herself for a moment from the others to wish me a courteous "*Buona sera, signora.*" As she leant over the parapet, she made a charming picture in her old-world beauty; the beauty inherited from the women who sat for the painters' saints and madonnas. The graceful black shawl worn by Venetians of her class draped her shoulders, and she shaded her eyes from the sun with the little paper fan which is the only precaution they use to keep off his scorching rays.

And now the date approached for another lottery. On the next Sunday night, when the time gun at San Giorgio boomed nine o'clock La Tombola would take place in the piazza. Already, a handsome pavilion with a dome-like roof was being erected there. It was built of wood, the sides gaily painted to simulate tiles.

Tickets were sold up to the last moment, and on Sunday the city was thronged. All day long, the arcades in front of the glittering shops in the piazza echoed to the sound of busy feet, and when evening came, an immense crowd, increasing every minute, surged towards the great rendezvous.

Here all classes of society met and mingled without distinction.

Merchants from Merceria, glass blowers from Murano, gondoliers and fisher folk. Harsh English voices, and the shrill, nasal twang of the Americans, were heard striking against the flowing liquid Italian. Here, haughty pale-faced Venetians, in silken gowns and flashing jewels, sat side by side with weird-looking ragged old hags.

All had assembled on a common ground, as competitors for the prizes, and held their little cards with figures printed on them.

It was the hottest and the thirstiest company I have ever been mixed up in. Florian's and the other cafés were doing a brisk trade in *granita* and iced coffee, their waiters hurried through the crowd carrying carefully balanced trays over the heads of the people with marvellous dexterity; while for those who could not afford these luxuries, the water sellers moved to and fro with never-ceasing cries of "*Acqua, signori; acqua fresca, signori. Acqua, acqua!*" The flower-girls followed them, and the scent of the anisette-flavoured water blended curiously with *stephanotis* and rose.

The mosquitoes were everywhere.

The moon poured down her mystical radiance on the domes and bronze horses of San Marco, making the beautiful square as bright as day. Now and then some pigeons, awakened by the noise, left their resting-place in the house of God and flew rapidly across the blue sky.

The gun had boomed nine o'clock more than an hour ago, and still we waited patiently, for they are not very punctual in Venice. During

the summer are not the nights long and charming? and is it not pleasure enough to sit in the piazza and gossip with your friend?

At last there was movement in the pavilion, and two exquisitely dressed little girls mounted the steps. These children were selected to assist in the drawing.

There were openings like small windows on three sides of the building, and from these, as each number turned up, it was announced to the crowd, while simultaneously one of the painted tiles swung round, showing the figures on its other side. The prizes were awarded, not to the possessor of a single lucky number, but to a succession of numbers following each other in a certain order. The first was claimed by a goldsmith in the Merceria, the second by two priests who had combined in the buying of their tickets.

And then the competition for the final and largest sum of money went on until nearly all the tiles were reversed. I thought it would never end, and wondered if Tonio and Bianca were present. I had not seen them, but concluded that they had hidden themselves somewhere on the fringe of the vast gallery.

Suddenly the crowd swayed and rocked with fresh excitement, and from lip to lip leaped the words "*La Tombola, La Tombola.*"

There was a rush towards the pavilion, and the police, with difficulty held back the mob from blocking up the narrow passage kept clear for the winners to advance and verify their claims. Order was restored, and then Bianca, calm and beautiful, but with grey eyes glowing like stars, walked up the pathway alone. Thus I learned that Madonna had granted the Biondina her heart's desire. I saw no more, for I was immediately swept off my feet with the stream of people who crossed the Ponte San Moisè. Happily for me, my way lay in that direction too.

Early next morning, I went out, according to my usual custom, and in San Marco I found the young lovers kneeling before the High Altar. I did not disturb them at their prayers, but met them as they left the church, hand in hand, like happy children. The blushing Biondina no longer wore her golden earrings; she had given them to Madonna. But with eyes so sweet, so mistily beautiful, with lips so tenderly parted and smiling, she required no ornament that beautiful Nature had not bestowed upon her.

"Madama," said Tonio, piously crossing himself, "we have been to thank the good God and our Blessed Lady."

"I wish you both much joy," I replied, and I kissed Bianca's fair face.

"Grazie, Signora," she murmured, while Tonio's soft mouth pressed a quick fluttering kiss on my hand.

He loved the whole world to-day.

The affair was quickly concluded. There was no longer any obstacle in the path of my two friends.

Before thirty days the contract was signed, and Bianca's father, the



"damn lazy facchino," took her to church, and Tonio led her out, rosy as the dawn.

The story is two years old now, but I received the other day a charming assurance that my Venetians had not forgotten me, in the shape of a cobwebby handkerchief of Italian lace, and in one corner the fair Bianca had worked in exquisitely fine stitches the words "Comè bacè."

SOPHIE L. MACINTOSH.

## THE HALLOWING OF THE FLEET

A MEMORY OF THE GREAT QUEEN

(From "*Ionica*")

HER captains for the Baltic bound  
In silent homage stood around ;  
Silent, whilst holy dew  
Dimmed her kind eyes. She stood in tears,  
For she had felt a mother's fears,  
And wifely cares she knew.

She wept ; she could not bear to say,  
"Sail forth, my mariners, and slay  
The liegemen of my foe."  
Meanwhile on Russian steppe and lake  
Are women weeping for the sake  
Of them that seaward go.

Oh ! warriors, when you stain with gore,  
If this indeed must be, the floor  
Whereon that lady slept,  
When the fierce joy of battle won  
Hardens the heart of sire and son,  
Remember that she wept.

WILLIAM CORY.

## IN THE OUTER HIMALAYAS

## A TOUR IN KUMAON

KUMAON, lying to the north of the North-West Provinces of India joins two extremes; on the south the level dusty plain stretching far away into the distance, with its patched fields of corn, clumps of mangos, and brown sun-baked earth; in the opposite direction reaching higher and higher with each succession of rolling hills until it touches the great wall of Himalayan mountains capped with perpetual snow.

The railway runs no further than Kathgodam (surely the hottest and dustiest of little stations!) and it was here we alighted on an afternoon early in September. The heat was intense, and the sight of blue hills beyond made one doubly eager for the climb to cooler regions. There were a few weary-looking civilians and a Judge Sahib hurrying on their way to Naini Tal for the vacation, but they had packed themselves and their baggage into a couple of tongas and clanked out of sight round the corner of the white winding road before we were ready to start; since a tour in the wilder tracts necessitates a long train of coolies and many arrangements.

At last, however, we had mounted our little country "tats" and were fairly started. After following the high road for some time it was a relief to turn off beneath the trees at Rani Bagh; though beyond the refreshing shade which it affords this "Queen's Garden" has little else to recommend it. There is nothing regal, certainly, about the group of squalid mud huts composing the village, or the small dusty babies clothed in a single line of string, who stop to gaze with wide brown eyes at the *Sahib-logue's* cavalcade.

We had chosen the best possible time for a tour in Kumaon, which, to be really enjoyed, should be commenced as soon as possible after the cessation of the rains, while the country is still green and fresh from its recent continuous shower bath. The occasional storms also which still burst upon the hills as if loth to leave them altogether, add an especial beauty to the scene. As we steadily mounted higher and higher that afternoon along a bridle path overhung by trees and heavy creepers, the leaves of which had been transformed into a thousand tiny mirrors by the freshening rain, the view gradually opened out before us. Far below, the hazy plain, rolling back like some vast dim interminable sea, high overhead masses of soft cloud casting down purple shadows upon jagged crest and rounded hill-side, and everywhere the sunshine breaking out in their wake streaming gloriously over the sparkling forests of pine and rhododendra.



SATH TAL, KUMAON



That evening we reached the first of the lakes, Bhim Tal, and took up our abode in the little *dak* bungalow. These Government rest-houses, consisting of two or three barely furnished rooms, are to be found at regular intervals upon the beaten tracks, and one is permitted to inhabit them for twenty-four hours at a nominal charge, or for longer should no one else arrive and require the rooms. The cleanliness of these places often leaves much to be desired, but after touring for a few weeks in this part of the world a little dirt more or less (not to mention centipedes or other more troublesome visitors), is taken as a matter of course. The house here is prettily situated overlooking the oval basin of the lake which, as a rule, is clear and limpid, though I have seen it churned to coffee colour after a storm, with no chance of the mud settling for a fortnight. The *mahseer* fishing is not as good here as in the sister lakes of Mulwa, Naucuchia, and Sath Tal, all situated within easy marches; Naini Tal, of course, being given over to pleasure boats and society generally. At Naucuchia, on the whole, we fared best, though the little fishing bungalow there is certainly not rain-proof. I have vivid recollections of a night spent in shifting my bed to and fro in the vain attempt to avoid relentless drippings; this was during a terrific tempest which raged in the neighbourhood for three days, making those in Naini Tal who had wilfully elected to live in "condemned" houses tremble for safety. There is a picturesque corner near at hand where an old white temple stands out against dark trees and banana bushes, reflected, together with the cattle grazing in front and the green rushes lower down, in the water of the lake. As a rule it is perfectly peaceful, the silence broken only by the splash of a jumping fish, or the cry of wild fowl coming up across the water.

Unless you are lucky enough to have brought private provisions, dinner at a *dak* bungalow is apt to be monotonous, fowl and curried mutton appearing with systematic regularity; perhaps there is a two-fold meaning in the native rendering of Bill of Fare as "Billy Fowl!" Bhim Tal always reminds me of home, on account, I suppose, of the little lawn in front, where the chickens (destined doubtless for some future curry) peck around one's feet. We used as a rule to take some live stock about with us. I remember one old duck went the whole tour, travelling in a basket, and quacking with companionable cheerfulness on our arrival at a resting-place.

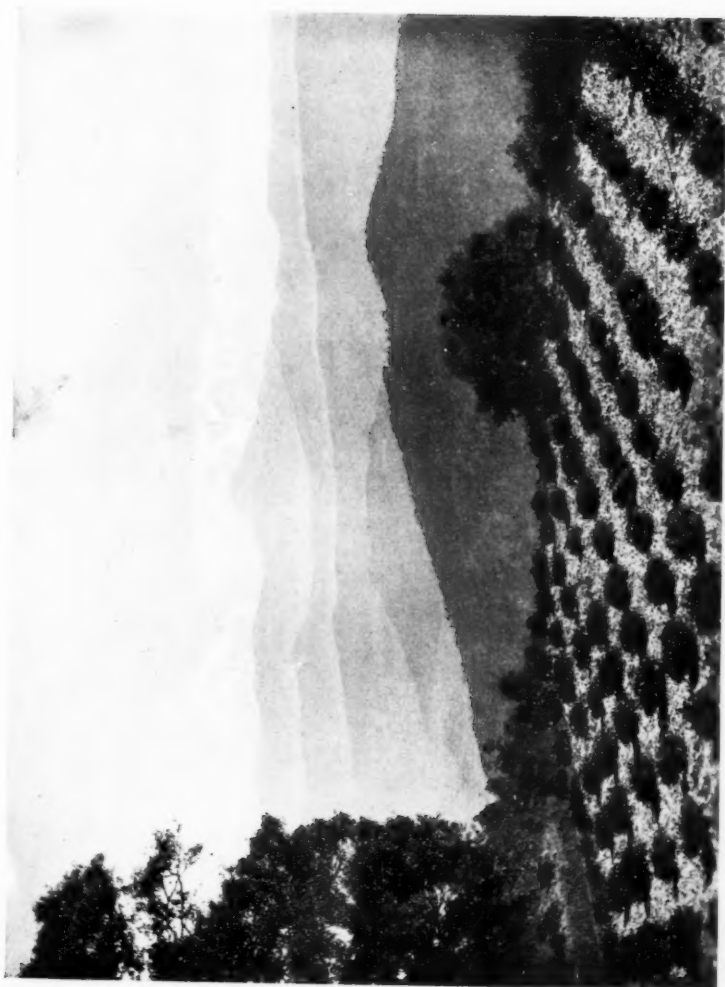
Sath Tal (Seventh lake) lies in a deep hollow, surrounded by wooded hills rising up on all sides until the tips of the feathery pines seem to brush the dome of the sky. Hardly a breath of wind sinks here to disturb the stillness, and in parts it is difficult to tell where the overhanging bows and weeds pass into reflection. From one of the heights above there is a splendid view across the intervening country to the snows, but the only occasion on which I succeeded in reaching the summit, thick mists and clouds hung like an angry sea, blotting out everything between myself and those cold distant peaks; this effect

in itself, however, was magnificent. There is something very fascinating in a mode of travelling which allows one to spend a day here and there according to fancy, alone with the woods, the hills, and the sky, with a *bandobast wallah* ("arrangement man") to prepare meals and bedding at the different stages; last but not least to be in a part of the country where tourists and guide-books are unknown.

On the way to Naini there is a turn in the road from which we were able to look back at Bhim Tal far below in the distance. It had been stormy all the afternoon, and the clouds were clearing off towards sunset near at hand, slowly lifting their pale grey curtain from one sharp outline to another, leading the eye on to where the mist was transformed to a glory of red and gold; the shafts of light darkening by contrast the rich purple of the hills, and revealing at their base the smooth, calm surface of the lake—a mirror to reflect it all again. Turning to push on further, I was greeted by the musical tinkle of raindrops pattering down from the leaves on to the banks beneath, and the steady rush of little distant waterfalls making their way to the valley. One needs to have lived through the long hot weather on the plains truly to appreciate such scenes as these.

Beyond Naini Tal we are further away from the beaten track, for though this is one of the principal ways to the Interior it is at best but a bridle path, with the steep banks rising and falling on either side, covered with tangled fern and weeds springing up in profusion after recent showers. Nearing Peora, through a frame of red-brown rhododendron boughs or delicately tufted branches of green pine, one catches sight here and there of the yellow hills rolling up to and round Almora, the blue crest of Binsar, and beyond, against the sky, an uneven line of snow stretching from Carhwala into Nepaul. The last march into Almora is hot and tiresome, bare of trees, with the dusty road and rocks steeped in a blinding glare; it is a comfort to reach the first plantation and rest a little awhile. We stayed in the house of a friend here, the garden, with its wide borders and spreading deodars, again reminding me of home, while the bougainvillia festooned about my bedroom window made a perfect blaze of burnished copper against the sky. After a long march there can be nothing more delightful than to find oneself in the shady, airy room of an Indian bungalow, with the sunshine filtering through the leaves and flowers around the open door, and the welcome sound of splashing water as the *bheestie* near at hand prepares one's bath.

The small house belonging to the Forest Department at Binsar is perched like a nest on the hillside, 9000 feet above the level of the sea, commanding a magnificent view of hills, which, rolling away beneath one, have the appearance of an endless plain stretching as far the eye can reach; a short climb in the other direction opens out more deep valleys, ending this time abruptly in the range of snow. In front are the smooth sides and triple notches of Treasul, further to the east Nanda Devi (25,660 feet), the highest peak of all, and the



IN SIGHT OF THE ETERNAL SNOWS





gleaming pyramid of Nanda Kot, forming a point of light sharp as cold steel against the sky. The air here is fresh and exhilarating, bearing new energy and strength across from those dazzling slopes; it is curiously clear and bright too, as if no insect life were stirring, and the long streamers of brown moss now dry from lack of moisture, hanging from the boughs above in absolute stillness, give one a feeling of being miles away somewhere in the depths of the ocean.

Our tiffin (lunch) was always served by the wayside, making an opportunity for rest and lazing a little, much appreciated by the *saices* and *jampanies*, who have been longing for a whiff of the companionable hookha; they disappear with the ponies and baggage around a corner, and one is left to enjoy the silence, broken only by a faint rustle of breeze playing over the grass or a trickling stream near by. Large butterflies come and hover round, fanning their beautiful gauzy wings in the sunshine, marked sometimes on the reverse sides with such perfect fidelity to nature that when closed it is impossible to tell them from a fallen leaf.

Each stage verily brought us to "fresh woods and pastures new." Some of the bungalows, as for example Takula, situated in the warmer valleys, are surrounded by banana trees and heavy vegetation, while others, like Pathyria, are perched on a high pinnacle, where to walk unguardedly out of one's bathroom is to court destruction upon the rocks 300 feet below. The open stretches here and there remind one of Scotland; the narrower winding passes, with the fertile land at the bottom cultivated up to the very edge of the pine-clad hills, of nothing so much as valleys in the Austrian Tyrol. The river, which rushes quickly through the quaint old village of Begeswar, winds some 50 feet below the pathway further on, first tumbling and boiling amongst the rocks, then gliding into calm deep pools, where even from this height the fish can be seen distinctly. Near the village of Baijnath it spreads out into a wider area, the shallows affording a refuge to the poor tormented buffaloes, who, to escape the flies, lie there all day long with their heads only appearing above the water.

From Baijnath the road leads steadily upwards to Kausanie tea gardens; in the distance the hillside looks as if it were studded with cannon balls, every available space being covered with the even rows of small round bushes. The summit gained, everything is forgotten but the wonderful snow mountains upon which one now again looks back. The road by which the ascent was made leads in rapid zigzags to the valley and fields, then the ground swells up again higher and higher, beyond the green line of vegetation, across the barren purple slopes until the eye at length rests upon that spotless wall. And here, on the verandah of the rambling Government bungalow, with roses trailing over the woodwork, and fresh grass around, one can sit all day long and watch the shadows change on the peaks of Treasul, marking how the morning sun strikes first on Nanda Devi, and in the evening how it lingers with apparent reluctance, gilding the glaciers, dyeing each

rise and fall in softest crimson, and, paling gradually into uncertain shadow, fades from one point and then another, until the whole range lies stern, cold, and silent beneath the twinkling stars.

There are many spots upon this earth which one would wish to visit, incomparably more beautiful doubtless than is this, but those who have been there will allow, I know, that there is pleasure in Kumaon.

CHARLES DALLAS.

### ONLY IN DREAMS

ONLY in dreams may I now hold thee fast  
And kiss thee love, on lips and eyes and hair ;  
Only in dreams, dear heart, so true and fair,  
Only in dreams.

Only in dreams, and they how quickly past,  
May I now hear the music of thy voice  
Waking each heart-chord answering to rejoice  
Only in dreams.

Yet still in dreams I love thee more and more,  
Soul of my soul, heart's love, oh ! be thou near,  
Come closer, let me touch thee, feel thee here  
Tho' but in dreams.

And when at last this night of dreams is o'er,  
Thine be the kiss to wake me at the dawn  
Thine be the voice to whisper " It is morn,  
Day endeth dreams."

C. C.

## A SPOILT TRIUMPH

THE old man rose from his chair gently, and listened carefully, his thin face alight with eagerness, his hands shaking a little, with the thought of possible escape. For once the kitchen was empty save for himself and the cat curled upon the hearth, the door was open, and through the entrance the sun shone temptingly and the sweet pungent smell of hay came in, and the noise and the shouting of men as they cut the hay from the rick, bound it into bundles, and loaded it on the kerries. Outside, all was life and brightness and freedom, all within primness, cold, spotless cleanliness.

"It was like living in a dairy," the old man often grumbled to himself. From the dairy itself came the clatter of heavy shoes on the stone floor, and the sound of a loud, unmodulated voice. The old man smiled to himself as he tiptoed to the door in his carpet slippers. He was on the point of crossing the doorstep when the clattering footsteps came into the kitchen, and the unmodulated voice called out shrilly:

"Why grandfather! What be doin'. Take and get back to your chair, there's a draught there by the door 'nough to kill 'ee."

"I was just going outside to stroll up and down in the sunshine a bit," said the old man feebly. The shock of being caught annoyed him and made him tremulous, but he knew he should give in, though as yet he had not turned. "'Tis so bootiful outside," he said wistfully.

"Yes, to look at, but there's quite a breeze, and what should I do if you was took bad in your 'eart out of doors? I couldn't carry 'ee home."

He sighed a little sigh of relief that that much at least was impossible to her.

"Come along now, come back to your comfortable corner and watch me getting the tea. I shall be here now for a bit to talk to 'ee." This last assurance did not bring to his face the joy one might have expected. He crept slowly back to his seat without another word, and sat gazing into the dull, almost dead fire. Rage and longing were burning in his old heart, rage at the woman and himself, and longing to be out with the workmen in the air and sunshine.

For three years, ever since Jeremiah Sibley, his grandson, had married, this state of things had been creeping on. Grandfather Sibley owned that his granddaughter-in-law was a good manager, a good cook and butter maker, and a fine strapping woman, but he did wish she would not try to manage him, and be nurse as well as farmer's wife, adopting him as her patient. At first he had not realised what was happening, he only thought her very kind and thoughtful for an old man's

needs, and was duly pleased with her; after a while he wished she would be less attentive, then he tried to avoid her attentions, but by that time it was too late, in every one's opinion but his own he was a poor, old, helpless invalid, assigned to the chimney-corner for the rest of his existence. By the end of three years he was relegated entirely to carpet slippers, and his boots were mere memories.

Grandfather Sibley sat in his chair and chewed the cud of many bitter thoughts. Rage burnt in him, and he cursed in his heart his own folly in having made over the farm to Jeremiah. All his woes dated from the last election when he had come home from a political meeting bursting with righteous wrath. Through a whole evening he had sat openmouthed, dumb with horror, listening to diatribes on the death duties. He had walked home calling down heaven's judgment on the promoter of such iniquity, he had lain awake through night after night facing the future, the break-up of his small savings and property.

On the next market day he drove into the town and talked the matter over with the neighbouring farmers, and the end of it was he resigned everything then and there to Jeremiah Sibley, his grandson, on condition the said Jeremiah gave his grandfather a good home for the rest of his days.

Jeremiah, amazed, overcome, rejoicing, agreed with alacrity. He was a thoroughly honest, good-hearted fellow, and, filled with gratitude for his grandfather's generosity, was bent on carrying out his share of the bargain. Nothing was too good for the old man, no trouble too great; but still Jeremiah felt he was not taking proper care of him; so, partly to remedy this state of affairs, and partly to please himself, he got married almost at once; and a very good home the old man would have had if it had not been for Mrs. Jeremiah's exaggerated desire to do her duty by him. She took too much care of him; he yearned for neglect.

She looked at him now and again in the midst of her preparations, and wondered at his abstraction. She was a woman absolutely devoid of tact. "In your carpet slippers, too," she began again. "Why, grandfather, what was 'ee thinking of? The cold would have struck up through the soles and given 'ee inflammation as sure as sure."

There were worse evils than inflammation, the old man thought; but he did not answer, his rage would not let him. His long-suppressed impatience, his bitter resentment, had got the better of him at last. He was taking silent oaths to get back his freedom somehow, and it was not until a sudden idea, the germ of a plan of action, had come to him that he could bring himself to speak.

His scheme had to be worked out gradually, but he began it that same evening. The following evening, when Jeremy came home, Susan met him with a solemn face. "I'm more than glad I stopped grandfather going out to that yard yesterday," she said gravely. "I should have blamed it all to that, and never forgive myself."

"Why, what's the matter?" Jeremiah asked, undisturbed.

"I don't know. I don't hardly know what to make of him, but—well, I don't like the look of him, and that's the truth."

Jeremiah had grown used to her alarmist moods, and had ceased to be affected by them as she would have had him be, but this time she herself was really frightened, and continued to watch the old man anxiously. The superstitious side of her nature was touched, and though she was prepared "for anything," she knew not what exactly to be prepared for. The next day, towards afternoon, after watching the old man furtively for some time, and increasing her nervousness by every glance, she suddenly put on her sun bonnet and went out to Jeremy. He was near home that day, working in the garden. "Grandfather is very bad," she gasped out as she came up to him, "very bad indeed."

"'E always is, seems to me."

"He's mortal bad."

Jeremy was hungry and rather bored by his grandfather's ailments.

"Well, I can't do 'im any good; he must get better, that's all."

"I reckon 'e's going to this time." Mrs. Sibley turned on her heel and bent with feigned absorption over a bed of young onions. Jeremy's placidity annoyed her, she wished him to be frightened too. He stopped turning over the earth in the middle bed, and looked at his wife questioningly.

"What do 'ee mean?" he asked, a touch of impatience in his voice.

"I don't like his looks and his ways at all. I believe he's near his end, and I can't stay there alone. I comed out because I couldn't 'bide there another minute. You'll have to stay with him."

"What does he look like?"

"'Tisn't so much his looks as the way he's going on. He keeps talking all the time to his own grandfather, the one that's hanging over the chimbley-piece, and 'tis a bad sign."

Jeremy was alarmed at last, but he tried not to show it. "Well, poor old man, he must have some one to talk to; it must be precious wisht 'biding there in that corner all the time, stuck in his chair."

Susan was hurt as well as frightened. "He's got me," she said indignantly, "I'm sure I'm always talking to him. I wonder you ain't afraid to say such things, Jeremy. 'Tis a bad sign, I tell 'ee, a sure sign."

Jeremy stuck his spade deeper into the ground, scraped his boots on it, and scratched his head doubtfully, and went towards the cottage. "Come on," he said to his wife, and waited till she came up.

Grandfather Sibley sat in his chair by the fire, his arms hanging inertly, his head sunk on his chest. He had been a very fine man in his prime, now he looked as though he was permanently bowed by the storms which had beaten against him, his scanty grey hair stood out in a ragged fringe around the base of his skull, as if a perpetual breeze were blowing through it. He was staring into the fire talking to himself when his grandchildren entered.

"Well, grandfather, 'ow be 'ee feeling this afternoon?" Jeremy thought that by speaking heartily, he should infuse a like feeling into the patient. It was only after the question had been thrice repeated, each time with less heartiness, that the old man answered, briefly, but civilly. "Bad, Jeremy; very bad." After which he resumed his monologue. He had developed such a predilection at this time, for conversing with departed members of his family or their spirits, that he seldom paid any heed to the talk of those still in existence, and to Susan Sibley's mind this one-sided talk was ghastly in the extreme, for as all knew, it was a sure and certain sign that he would soon join those he was conversing with.

Jeremy looked at his wife with an expression of alarm on his simple, kindly face. This phase of the old man's illness was far more frightening to him than any bodily symptoms could have been. The afternoon sun which was shining brilliantly outside, crept around until it shone in slanting-wise through the window, and fell full on the mantel-piece and the wall above, on which hung fourteen black-framed memorial cards, twelve small ones forming a diamond-shaped enclosure around the two largest of them all. The two thus edged about were to the memory of Zebedee Sibley, and Maria Sibley, the grandparents of the old man, and great-great-grandfather and grandmother to Jeremiah. The enclosing twelve were descendants of the same. Not an unbroken record altogether, for some of the family had died, at least it was presumed they were dead, in foreign parts, or at sea, others had not been in a position to be indulged in memorial cards, while in a few cases family estrangements had interfered with the circulation of them.

These missing sprigs of the family tree were so many grievances to Grandfather Sibley, they worried him by their absence, he did not even know the dates of their births or deaths, much less other details, that he might fill them in in his own mind, and he felt it, it aggravated him as a half-remembered quotation would aggravate another man.

For three years he had sat in that chair in that same spot, with nothing to read but those memorials of the past, nothing to look at but them and the fire, and the plants in the little, high, short-waisted window on the opposite wall. He had read them until he knew them by heart, and talked to himself of them until he had composed a chant of the details the cards did not give:

- "Zebedee and Maria died in their beds.
- "John and Bathsheba took off by small-pox.
- "Henry Thomas drowned, fishing.
- "Dick died blasting.
- "Jonas the rheumatics to the heart.
- "Mary Hanniah the Viper's Dance.
- "Lisha Henry and Rosina measles.
- "Joseph Abner water on the brain.
- "Melchisedeck the inflammation.
- "Silas fell down the shaft, likewise Thomas."



The sun striking on the memorial cards now, attracted his attention, he roused himself and looked at them thoughtfully for a moment, then he began in a low voice and speaking with difficulty, the old wearisome chant. Jeremy and Susan listened intently, as though they had never heard it before, or might never hear it again.

"Silas fell down the shaft—likewise Thomas," quavered the old voice. "Grandfather Luke," meaning himself, "want of proper remedies." Then he sank into a state of apathy again.

Jeremy turned to his wife. "You hear what he says!" he cried, "it's a pretty thing! when there isn't too much we could do for 'im. Why haven't he had proper remedies? A nice scandal if anybody else hears tell of what he says. What 'ave 'ee been giving 'im?"

For the moment Susan was stricken dumb with amazement, but at Jeremy's outcry she grew angry, as well as frightened. "Well," she cried, righteously indignant, "I ain't a doctor, don't profess to be, but I've fed un, and coaxed un, and coddled un till I've wore myself out; if I've warmed elder tea for un once a day, I've warmed it a dozen times; dandelion tea I've given to un till—till there isn't a drop left, and herb tea—and—and what more to do than I do do I don't know." Her wrath gained in strength with outward expression; the old man, though apparently sunk in sleep or unconsciousness, listened eagerly. "I don't mind wearing myself to my grave; nobody can deny that, but I do stick at being scandalised in that way. And if others," she went on, her voice waxing shrill and quavering with the indignation that filled her, "can do more, or *thinks* they can—well, let 'em do it, I says. Any'ow, I gives 'im up; I won't take the responsibility of un no longer. You can go to the expense of a doctor, or you can mind 'im yourself—but it seems to me a pity to go to the expense of a doctor where folks is so clever theirselves, so p'rhaps you'd better do the minding yourself, Jeremy Sibley, and see what you can do; there's nothing like letting folks try for theirselves when they think there's nothing they don't know, and never mind the farm, or the harvest coming on, nor nothing; perhaps I may be fit to see that the men does their work; any'ow, what does anything matter so long as you'm 'tending on your grandfather, and giving him the *proper* remedies." She stopped from want of breath. The old man had apparently sunk into deep sleep. Jeremy stood looking embarrassed and troubled.

"I never said I was clever," he protested mildly. He might honestly have added that it was the very last claim he would have dreamed of making.

But Susan bounced out of the room with a snort that was more aggravating than any answer could have been. Jeremy stood for some seconds looking anxiously at the old man. "Grandfather," he said softly. "Grandfather, we never meant to neglect 'ee. Can 'ee tell me what you'd like us to do?" He was dreadfully troubled by the thought that the old man had been neglected, after all he had done for them, too.

Grandfather Luke opened his eyes with startling suddenness, considering the state he had been in a few minutes before. "Where's Susan?" he asked in a whisper.

"Out meating the pigs," answered Jeremy, who had been following the sounds from the back part of the farm while ruefully pondering over the situation.

"She won't be in for a bit?"

"No; she's vexed."

"Aw! Well, she'll get over it. Stoopy down, Jeremy. I want to tell 'ee something." Jeremy bowed his head to a level with the old man's. "I'm going to get cured," he whispered. "I've had enough of catching and coddling." Jeremy's face was a picture of complete bewilderment.

"Ain't 'ee——?"

"No! I ain't had nothing the matter with me at all," interrupted his grandfather; "only Susan would have it to be that I had, and she's that masterful; if she says you'm dying, why, there's nothing for it but to die. It's come to that I can't eat nor drink but what she tells me I may, nor walk, nor put my nose outside the door. I dunno if she reckoned that because I gave up the farm as I did that my mind was gone. But, anyhow, I'm going to get it cured. See, lad?"

Jeremy's mind was in a whirl. He had never thought so seriously of the old man's state as his wife had, but had quietly accepted her masterful management of them all, as he accepted most things. His first bewilderment over though, he grasped the situation with a celerity his wife would never have believed him capable of.

"What be goin' to do?" he asked, beginning to enjoy the joke.

"Well—it's to be a outdoor cure for one thing, and you've got to get me my boots. I haven't set eyes on 'em for two years."

Jeremiah laughed. "There's one pair," he said showing his feet encased in a pair of "Wellingtons," "but my best ones is yours too, and they are very good still."

"She's willing you should step into my shoes every way," said Grandfather Luke bitterly.

"Aw now grandfather, she didn't mean it like that," Jeremy protested, he couldn't hear his wife unfairly judged, "but leather spiles with keeping you know, and she can't bear waste."

His grandfather consented to be mollified; he was in such good spirits at the prospect of emancipation, he could think lightly of minor matters.

"Then wasn't you really talking out," asked Jeremy after pondering silently far some moments. "When you was talking Grandfather Zebedee?"

"You'd best be quiet, Jeremiah, you want to know too much. Any-ow 'twas Grandfather Zebedee, or somebody else told me how to get cured."

"Aw! 'ow?"

"I've got to go to 'Oly Well, twice a day," said the old man solemnly. "See? I've got to go and drink the water, twice a day. There's a wonderful power of good in that spring, I've always heard tell."

"But 'tis a long way off, grandfather. You'll never walk it. Shall I bring 'ee home some in a bottle? I could easy."

The old man started up in a rage. "'Old your tongue," he cried in a suppressed tone. "Don't you dare say no such thing before—before Susan. I've got to go to the well. See?" and the old man, calming down as quickly as he had flared up, winked at his grandson knowingly.

"I see," said Jeremy, winking solemnly.

"If Susan, or anybody else, suggests bringing the water 'ome, why—you tell 'em I've got to dip myself in the well, tell 'em anything, only let me go to it. You've got to drive me back and fore for a time or two, but in time the water'll have done me such a sight of good I'll be able to walk. See, Jeremy?" and he winked again.

Jeremy again winked back. His heart was as much in the plot now as his grandfather's was. "When will 'ee start?"

"Well, I reckon I oughtn't to to-day, or she'll be suspicioning something. You break it to her to-night, my lad. You tell her you'm going to try the cure for me, and say I agreed to it."

"Alright," agreed Jeremiah, but less hopefully, "if her temper keeps up her'll be all right, but——"

The old man was thoughtful for a moment, then he chuckled, "Don't be frightened if you hears me talking out again by'meby," he said, "though you can pretend to be if you like." Jeremy nodded again, he did not quite understand, but by this time he had come to look on his grandfather as a wonder amongst men.

But Susan, when told by Jeremy with much quaking of spirit and fumbling of speech of the plan he had in his mind, raised no objection. "Of course, you being so knowledgable knows best, only when you've killed him don't come crying to me for help, that's all," she replied, with the superior, uninterested air Jeremy hated worst of all her moods. Then she retired for the night, leaving him to get the "invalid" to bed, and to see to his comforts. To her surprise and disappointment, too, when Jeremy at length sought his pillow he showed no signs of worry or distractedness, nor did he ask her advice or help.

And she lay awake feeling really sorry for the old man who was so near death that his mind was already with those who had gone before, and who, if he lived through this night would have sought and found his end before another night should have fallen.

Grandfather Luke himself could not sleep for excitement, but this did not affect his spirits the next day. All through the drive to the well, Jeremy could hardly keep his eyes off the old man. He even began to wonder if there was not something uncanny about him.

Susan had taken no part in the morning's proceedings beyond

bringing armsful of blankets, rugs, mufflers and cushions, to make what she considered would probably be the patient's last resting-place, in the bottom of the cart, and Jeremy, with his conscience smiting him for the deception he was helping to put on her, and reduced by her manner to an eager desire to conciliate her, wrapped each and all about the old man, who passively, to all outward seeming, bore all his grandchildren chose to do for him. But after the first half-mile with each yard he shed a wrap.

The Holy Well stood in a hollow at the bottom of a field, and could only be reached on foot, so, tying the old horse up to the gatepost they walked the last few yards of their pilgrimage. A shade of gravity had come over the pilgrim's spirits. He felt somewhat dizzy now with the shaking of the cart and the fresh air after his long confinement. In his hand he carried a mug, he honestly believed in the water, and was bent on taking it.

The picturesque little building, standing deep in long, coarse grass and luxuriant bushes, was built so that its back was towards them as they approached. "Reg'lar marsh all round it," I reckon, said Jeremiah, and he took the old man a long way round to avoid the damp. When at last they reached the entrance they stood still suddenly, staring stupidly first at the well, then at each other. There was not a drop of water to be seen; the well must have been dry for months.

Susan was standing at the back door as they drove into the yard and up to it, she took no apparent notice of them, though she eyed them keenly. When Grandfather Luke descended alive from the cart she breathed a sigh of genuine relief; when she noticed his altered manner, she began to think the well-water must possess more miraculous powers than even Jeremy had claimed for it.

The old man was sensible and almost alert, but Jeremy seemed low-spirited and ill at ease, and as the days went by and he performed his pilgrimage morning and evening, his depression increased, though the perfectness of the cure his suggested remedy had wrought in the old man should have made him just the reverse.

Susan growing more and more amazed at her ex-patient's miraculous and speedy recovery, determined to try it too. She was tired and out of spirits, she was troubled, too, about Jeremiah; he was not himself, she could see plainly, though he did not complain. She could not bring herself to ask him what was wrong; for she had become possessed of a sensitive fear that he was afraid after her conspicuous failure with her grandfather, to put himself in her hands. She was terribly hurt by the thought, but Jeremy's depression counted more with her than her own pain. She must cure him somehow, perhaps a little of the same wonderful water given to him unbeknown, would do him good too. At any rate she could try it, it couldn't do him any harm. She would go at once to get some.

Grandfather Sibley, driving slowly along the road, wondering what had become of Susan, did not once dream that a well-known figure had but

just paced briskly along that same road before them. They were very early that afternoon. Jeremiah was anxious to get back to his hay-fields. These pilgrimages rather interfered with the work of the farm, but they dared not suggest, as originally planned, that the old man should walk, lest Susan should insist on accompanying him, and discover their deceit—the deceit that was weighing so heavily on Jeremiah, and so lightly on his grandfather.

The horse knew their ways so well now, they did not bother to tie him up. They would not have bothered to go through the form of going to the well, only they were always afraid lest they might be seen. So far, thanks to the busy season, none of the work-people had time to visit the scene of the cure. Jeremiah's conscience insisted, too, that he might, at any rate, be able to say truthfully that he had "been to well."

Susan standing, bottle in one hand, cup in the other, staring dumb-founded, bewildered, angry, into the little waterless building, heard them coming, and was seized with a wild longing to escape, to hide, not to have to face them. Rage at the trick they had played her, mortification at being found there, blazed furiously in her. She could not endure the sight of them now. She turned to run, she did not know where, but to escape their eyes and their laughter at her expense. She ran straight into Jeremiah's arms, her angry eyes glaring up at him looked straight into his unhappy ones.

With an almost superhuman effort she regained the mastery over herself, and conquered her panic, helped, partly, perhaps, by Jeremy's evident shame. Jeremy, she saw, was in a becoming state of mind. She turned to the old man who had come around the other side of the well. He too was a prey to embarrassment and shame. The position was hers to take if she chose. She took it and regained her self-respect at the same moment. With her most crushingly superior air she held out the bottle she had at first instinctively hidden under her shawl.

"I walked all this to borrow a drop of [the water for a friend who is partic'ly needing it," she said in her coldest and most severe tone. "I didn't know you drank it dry," and turning away she stalked majestically up the field, mounted into the cart and drove calmly home.

"She don't really think that," said the old man, breaking the long silence which had lasted nearly the whole of the weary walk back. "I wonder what is in her mind about it all?"

"Susan Sibley ain't no fool," said Jeremiah gloomily, and for the moment they almost wished she was.

MABEL QUILLER-COUCH.

## A KNIGHT

BY JOHN SINJOHN

## IV

"TIME went on. We became famous; men said there was no swordsman or pistol-shot like me in London; I guess that was not true, still we were able to increase our terms—it was the only part of my life when I have been able to make money. You must understand there was no time for spending; we gave lessons all day and in the evening we were tired. That year, too, I had the misfortune to lose my dear mother, I became a rich man—yes, sir, at that time I must have possessed not less than six hundred pounds a year.

"Now I must tell you, sir, it was over a year before I saw Eilie again. She went abroad to Dresden with her father's sister to learn how to speak French and German. It was in the autumn of the year 1875 when she came back to us in London. She was seventeen, sir, a beautiful thing!" He raised his cap, laid it on his knee, and seemed to forget it, for he went on bareheaded.

"She was tall, sir, as a young tree, with eyes like the sky. I would not tell you that she was perfect—for she had a little stoop, and she was thin, but, sir, her imperfections were beautiful too. What is it makes you love—ah! sir, I believe it is a very hidden and mysterious thing. I must tell you, too, that she had never lost that trick of closing her lips tightly when she remembered her uneven tooth. You may say it was vanity, but in a young girl do you tell me that is not a good thing?" He turned with a faint smile: "Which of us is not vain: 'old men and maidens, young men and children,' I, for one, am a very vain man. . . . Well, sir, as I said, she came back to London to her little room, and in the evenings she was ready for us with tea. What a refreshing thing, tea! meat and drink, after work, and before, too. You must not suppose that she was what is called housewifely—no, no, that would be wrong." I could see him shaking his head; he murmured, "I could never admire housewifeliness; there is something in me—it is bad, I suppose—a fine quality, no doubt, still——" He sighed.

"No, sir," he resumed with resolution, "Eilie was not like that, she was never quite the same two days together. I told you her eyes were like the sky—it is true of all of her. And yet at that time in one thing she seemed always the same—for her father she had nothing but love, and for me—well, sir, I don't know what I should have expected. No, no, if I were in the room she was very quiet; sometimes I would



catch her looking at me with a frown, and then, as if to make up to her own nature—and a more loving nature never came into this world, sir—she would go to her father and kiss him. When I talked with him, she would pretend not to notice—sometimes, sir, if I turned I would see her looking stubborn and cold. I am not quick; it was a long time before I understood that she was jealous, she wanted him all to herself. Often and often I have wondered how she could be his daughter, for he, sir, was the very soul of justice and a slow man too, and she—she was as quick as a bird. A long time I saw her dislike, but you know, if one does not wish to believe a thing there are always reasons why it should not seem true; at least it is so with me, and I suppose with all selfish men.

“Well, sir, I let it go; spending evening after evening there, when, if I had not thought only of myself. . . . But, sir, one day I could no longer be blind.

“It was a Sunday in February with snow on the ground. B-r-r-r! how hateful the cold is! I arrived at Dalton’s—for I had always an invitation on Sundays to visit them for dinner in the middle of the day. There was no one in the sitting-room; the door of Elie’s bedroom was open. Sir, I have no excuse; I heard voices, and I listened. ‘Elie, Brune is coming.’ ‘That man, always that man!’ I didn’t wait; I walked about all that day—it was the coldest of the whole year.

“For three weeks I kept away. I came to the school as usual, but not upstairs. I do not know what I told Dalton; it did not signify, for he was a man who always had a shrewd theory of his own, and was persuaded of its truth—a most single-minded person. And now, sir, I come to the most wonderful days of my life. It was the end of March, an early spring that year, the buds already showing on the trees. I must tell you that I had fallen away from my resolution; I would slink up—very seldom, it is true—and spend the evening with them as before. One day I came up to the sitting-room; the light was just failing, a warm evening, and the windows open. In the air, sir, was that feeling which comes once a year, no matter where you are, in a crowded street, or alone in a forest; only once—a feeling like the birth of all emotion; can you tell me how it comes or whence?

“Elie was sitting with her chin on her hands. If you do not know, sir, I cannot tell you what it is in the springtime to be near the woman one loves. . . . I stood looking at her. She was staring into the street, the back of her neck was moving gently as she breathed; the little golden hairs . . . It seemed, sir, as though she might be looking for some one; at such times one does not ask oneself questions; one is dumb, one hardly breathes. Sir, she turned her head, her eyes were soft, a little startled; God knows they seemed to ask me a question. I sat down, I would not have spoken for all the world. It grew darker; we sat quite still. Sir, no one can make me believe there was not a spirit in the room, a spirit passing between her and me. I cannot tell you what I felt; I dared not speak, or think, or even hope—I believe



that that was prayer. I have been in nineteen battles, several times I have been in positions of considerable gravity, when the lifting of a finger meant death; but never have I felt what I felt at that moment. I knew something was coming, sir; I knew it as I know that we are sitting on this bench. I was paralysed with terror lest it should not come, and my heart—ah, sir!” He drew a long breath.

“Yes, a man was lighting the street lamps, and I counted them, over and over again. The servant came in with a light. I could not stand that, I went away; but all night long I lay awake and thought of how she looked at me, the colour mounting slowly in her cheeks. Sir, I trembled and wondered. . . . It was three days before I found the courage to go again. I sat down to picquet with Dalton; at once I felt her eyes on me—she was making a ‘cat’s cradle’—and they would steal up from her hands to my face. At last she gave up her string and went wandering round and round the room touching and fingering at everything. Dalton called out: ‘What’s the matter with you, Eilie?’ She dropped her hands, and started round at him like a child caught doing wrong. I looked at her; she flushed, grew white, tried to look at me. Sir, she could not; a minute later she went away to her own room. Dalton said: ‘Is the child unwell?’ Perhaps I answered him; at such minutes one—I was too happy; have you ever been quite happy? I hope so. . . . Well, sir, I have no words to tell you of that time. Often and often Dalton said: ‘Brune, what’s come to the child? Nothing I can do pleases her—she’s bewitched.’ It was true, sir, all the love she had given him was now for me; but he was too straightforward to see what was not intended for his eyes. How many times have I not felt criminal towards him! But when you are happy, with the tide in your favour, you become a coward at once. Listen!” He held up his hand: “One o’clock striking. Too bad, keeping you up—and yet——!” I begged him to go on.

“You are sure? Well, I shall not be long now.” He paused a minute with his eyes fixed upon my face.

## V

“YES, sir, on her eighteenth birthday we were married. . . . First, I must tell you that for a long time Dalton was not aware of our love; it will always remain a wonder to me, sir—the simple faith of his soul. But one day he came to me with a grave look upon his face.

“‘Brune,’ he said, ‘Eilie has told me. I forbid it. She’s too young, and you—you’re too old!’ Sir, I was then forty-five, my hair as black and thick as—a rook’s feathers, and I was active—a strong, active man.” In the darkness I could see his fingers brushing at the ends of his moustache. He went on sadly: “How do you think I answered him? ‘We shall be married within a month!’ We parted in anger. It was evening, a May night, and I walked out of London

far into the country. When you are angry, sir, go walking, there is no remedy so fine. Once I stopped—on a common without a house or light near, and the stars like beautiful jewels above me. I was hot from walking, I could feel the blood in my veins. ‘Ah!’ I said to myself, ‘old, are you?’ Sir, I threw up my head like a fool, and laughed. It was the thought of losing her—I wished to believe that I was angry, but it was really fear; fear and anger in me, sir, are very close together. A friend of mine, a poet, called them ‘the black wings of self,’ and it is true. In the morning I was sorry. I went to Dalton; I thought of what it meant to him, and I was sorry. I am not a philosopher, but it has often seemed to me that no benefit can come to us in life without an equal loss to other people, and yet does that stop our grasping? Sir, I think not often. . . .

“We were married on the 30th of June, 1876, at the parish church. No one was there but Dalton, Lucy, and Lucy’s husband—such a big, red-faced man, with blue eyes and a golden beard parted into two. After the wedding he took Lucy away; it had been arranged that we should spend the honeymoon at their inn. Then my wife, Dalton, and I went to a restaurant for lunch. Sir, she was dressed in grey, the colour of a pigeon’s feathers.” He paused, leaning forward with his chin on the crutch of his stick; and I tried to picture that young girl in her dress “the colour of a pigeon’s feathers,” with blue eyes and yellow hair, a little frown between her brows, the red lips pressed together opening to say: “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health”—I tried to imagine the sound of those words, high pitched, and with a little lisp. The old fellow’s voice rose again: “At that time, sir, I was a dandy. I remember I wore a blue frock coat, with white trousers, and a grey top hat. Even now, sir, I should always prefer to be well dressed. . . . What a lunch we had! We drank—we drank Veuve Clicquot, delicious—a wine you cannot get in these days. Dalton came with us to the railway station. I cannot bear partings, sir; and yet they must come. . . . In the cool of the evening we walked out of the inn under the aspen trees; sir, their leaves seemed to me like a choir of birds full of praise at my good fortune. What should I remember in all my life if not that night—the young bullocks snuffling in the gateways—campion flowers all lighted up along the hedges—the moon with a halo, not the wicked sort, no, sir, a fine weather halo—bats, too, in and out among the stems, and the shadows of cottages as black and soft as that sea below us. We did not talk—for a long time we stood on the river bank beneath a lime tree. The scent of its flowers! There is only room in a man’s heart for a certain measure of joy.” In a whisper he added, “For a certain measure of sorrow”; and was silent a minute. “Lucy and her husband—did I tell you his name was Tor—Frank Tor—a man like an old Viking, and eating nothing but milk and bread and fruit—how good they were to us! The commissariat indeed—one could have wished—eggs and bacon each morning for

breakfast ; for dinner a ham or roast pork—nearly always pig, sir, and, after all, what can be nicer ? ” He meditated, then went on with alacrity, “ But when we had a chicken or a duck, what a fête day ! In our bedroom the sweetbriar grew right round the windows, the breeze would blow the leaves across the opening, ’twas like a bath of perfume. I cannot give you an idea of how clean everything was ; the walls, too, were white, but there was only one picture—a remarkable sketch of some Scotch lake with cows in the foreground ; what do you think some wag had written coming out of the mouth of the biggest cow—you would never guess—‘ What, ch ! we are the milky ones.’ Even Eilie would laugh at that, for, if you think of it, it was extremely witty. She became as brown as a gipsy. I loved her, sir ; I do not think any man could have loved her more.” He mused. “ But, sir, there were times when my heart stood still ; it didn’t seem as if she understood how much I loved her.” He suddenly laid his hand upon mine, as if to make his meaning plainer. “ It was not that she was cold ; no, no ! She would rush into my arms ; but the minute after she would run off, plucking the flowers, or singing to herself. I remember one day, when she coaxed me to take her camping. We lazied down the stream, she taking her turn with the skulls, for she could row better than I. In the evening we pulled into the reeds under the willow-boughs, and lit a fire for her to cook by—though, it is true, all our provisions were cooked already ; but you know how it is, all the romance was in having a real fire. ‘ We won’t pretend, will we ? ’ she kept saying. While we were eating our supper a great hare came lolloping up to the clearing—how surprised he looked to see us ! ‘ The tall hare,’ Eilie called him. We sat by the ashes and watched the shadows ; at last, sir, she roamed away from me. The time went very slowly ; I got up to look for her. It was sundown ; I called her name ; a water-rat was squeaking, it was lonely ; I thought, what can have become of her ? I was frightened. Sir, it was a long time before I found her : and she was like a wild thing, hot and flushed, her pretty frock torn, her hands and face scratched, all her hair about her neck, like a beautiful creature of the woods, and chattering, sir, of her adventures. I was silent, I could not help it ; if one loves, a little thing will scare one. I do not think, sir, that she noticed ; but when we were back at the boat she threw her arms round my neck and cried, ‘ I won’t ever, ever leave you.’ Before it was quite dark I crept into the boat and spread the bed and put up the awning. Once, sir, in the night I woke and looked out ; a waterhen was crying, and there in the moonlight a king-fisher flew across. The wonder on the river—the wonder of the moon and trees, the soft, bright mist, the stillness ! I cannot give you even a glimpse of my feelings. It was like another world, peaceful and enchanted, far holier than ours ; sir, I will tell you : it seemed like the vision of the thoughts that come to one—how seldom !—and which are gone if one does but try to grasp them. Magic, sir ! It wants a tongue of silver ; a poet could tell you of it, but for me to try would not be

right—for I think you will agree with me that poetry is something sacred.” He was silent a minute, then went on in a high voice: “Sir, I looked at her, sleeping like a child with her hair all loose, her lips apart; and I thought, ‘God do so to me, if ever I bring her pain!’ How was I to understand her?—the mystery and innocence of her soul—the mystery and innocence of her soul.”

I tried to get a look at his face under the peak of the cap; except for the white line of the moustache, it was black as ebony—I could tell nothing from it. He said quietly: “The river! it’s had all light and all darkness, the happiest days, and the hours when I’ve despaired; and I like to think of it; for do you know, sir, in time bitter memories fade; only the good remain. . . . Yet the good, too, have their own pain, a different kind of pain, an aching, for we shall never get them back. Well,” he said, turning to me with a faint smile, “it’s no use crying over spilt milk. . . . In the neighbourhood of Lucy’s inn, the ‘Rose and Maybush’—can you imagine a prettier name than that?—I have been in many parts of the world, but nowhere have I found such pretty names as in England; why, sir, they seem like the breath of the places themselves, as though, if I may say so, they came of their own accord; and I don’t know if you’ve noticed how in your country every blade of grass, every flower that grows in the hedges has a kind of pride about it from knowing it is sure to be looked after; every road and tree and cottage are at home; you might say they were certain they would live for ever— But I was going to tell you: Half a mile from the inn was a quiet old house of a very long and solid shape, which we used to call the ‘Convent’—they told us, indeed, it was a farm, but I cannot say we saw any signs. Many afternoons we spent there trespassing in the orchard; Eilie was very fond of trespassing; if there were a long way round across somebody else’s property, sir, I guess she would take it. ‘Suppose they were to come after us with whips or pitchforks!’ she would say; but they never did; no, sir, the most they would do was to give you good-day. The last afternoon of all we spent in that orchard; we lay in the long grass; I recollect it was full of insects. Sir, I was reading for the first time ‘Childe Harold’—a wonderful, a memorable poem! The bull fight—you remember:

‘Thrice sounds the clarion; lo, the signal falls,  
The din expands, and expectation mute—’

I had lost myself—it is a bad habit I have with a book. Suddenly Eilie said: ‘Suppose I were to leave off loving you?’ It was just as if some one had leaned across the wall and flicked my face with a whip lash. Did I answer? I don’t know, sir; I jumped to my feet. I ran to take her in my arms, but she slipped away; suddenly she turned, and began laughing softly—I laughed too—I don’t know why——”

## VI

“THE next day we went back to London; we lived in the top part of a house in the same street as the school, and five days in the week Dalton would come and dine with us. He wouldn't come every day, for he was that kind of man who refuses to consult his own pleasure. We had more pupils than ever, and in my leisure, sir, I taught Eilie to fence. I have never seen any creature so lithe and quick; beautiful she looked in her fencing-dress, with embroidered blue shoes.

“Well, sir, I was happy. When a man has obtained what he desires it is very easy to become careless and self-satisfied; I was watchful of myself, for I know that I am naturally a selfish man. I studied to arrange my time and save money, to give her as much pleasure as I could. What she loved best in the world at that time was riding. I bought her a horse, and in the evenings of the spring and summer we rode together; but when it was too dark to go out late, she would ride alone, great distances, sometimes spend the whole day in the saddle, and come back so tired she could hardly walk upstairs—I cannot say I liked that; I used to be nervous, she was so headstrong—but I did not think it right to interfere with her liberty. I had a good deal of anxiety about money at that time, for though I made more than ever, there never seemed any to spare. I was anxious to save—I hoped, I hoped—but, sir, there was no child; it was a trouble to me. She grew more and more beautiful, and I think, sir, at that time she was happy. Has it ever struck you that each one of us lives upon the edge of a volcano, at any moment—what I would say, sir, is, that there is, I imagine, no one of us who has not some affection or interest so strong that beside it he counts the rest for little. Often, I suppose, a man lives his life through securely—it is not so with all of us—I am far from complaining; what is—is.” He pulled the cap lower over his eyes, and, clutching his hands firmly upon the top of his stick, went on. He suggested to me a man who rushes his horse at some almost insurmountable fence, unwilling to give himself time, from the very fear of “craning.” “In the spring of 1878 a new pupil came to me, a young man of twenty-one who was going into the army. Sir, I took a fancy to him; I did my best to make him a good swordsman and a good shot, but—a curious thing—there was in him a kind of utterly perverse and reckless nonchalance; for a few minutes one would make a great impression, and then an insolent carelessness would come upon him. ‘Gilbert,’ I would say to him, ‘I guess if I were you I would be ashamed.’ ‘Mr. Brune,’ he would answer, ‘why should I be ashamed? I didn't make myself;’ and he would beg me for a drink, or offer to toss me for sovereigns. Sir, I earnestly wish to do him justice, he had a heart—one day he drove up in a cab, and brought into the school his poor dog; it had been run over,

and was dying—for half an hour he shut himself with its body into the bathroom, and, sir, we could hear him sobbing like a child; he came out with his eyes all red, and cried: 'I know where to find the brute who drove over him; out of the way, let me go,' and rushed off. He had beautiful eyes like an Italian's; a slight figure, not very tall; dark hair, a little dark line of moustache; and his lips were always a trifle apart—it was that, and his walk and the way he would drop his eyelids a little that gave him a look of soft, proud recklessness. One day he came to the school after hours—I must tell you, sir, that he was never punctual; I used to say, 'Gilbert, you will never make a soldier.' 'Oh!' he would answer, 'that'll be all right when the time comes.' Sir, that was the very man: he believed in a kind of luck that was to do everything for him when the time came. I was giving Eilie a fencing lesson; it was the first time they saw each other. And after that day he came more often, sometimes stayed, and I took him home to dine with us. He was waiting for his commission; he had missed some formality, and lost his chance for six months. I will not deny, sir, that I was glad to welcome him, I thought it good for my wife. Can there be anything more odious," he burst out, "than such self-satisfied blindness? There are people who say, 'Ah, poor man, his faith was so great!' I say it's not faith, it's conceit, sir. I was a fool, and in this world one pays for folly. . . .

"The summer came, and one Saturday, at the beginning of June, Eilie, I and Gilbert—sir, I would rather not tell you his other name—went riding into the country. The night had been wet, there was no dust in the air, and presently the sun came out—a glorious day! We rode a long way. About seven o'clock we started to ride back, slowly, for it was still hot, and there was all the cool of the night before us. It was nine o'clock when we came to Richmond Park. A grand place, sir, Richmond Park; and in that half-light wonderful, the deer moving so softly, you might almost think them spirits. We were silent too—I have always found that great trees have that effect upon me, when you are amongst them words seem so small. Eilie had talked but little all day; she was drooping in her saddle, and he rode beside her, whistling a tune called, I believe 'The Lorelei.' . . . Sir, who can say when changes come? Like a shift of the wind, as sudden, all the old passes, the new is upon you. I am telling you of that change. . . . Without a sign, without a warning, she put her horse into a gallop. I shouted, 'What are you doing?' She looked back with a smile, a strange smile; in that moment he dashed past me too. It was as if a demon had stung them both; over fallen logs they galloped, in and out of the trees, through the bracken, under low hanging branches, up hill and down, like mad things. Sir, what could I do? I had to watch that madness—to watch! the hardest thing of all—my horse was not so fast; I too rode like a demon, but I fell further and further behind. Sir, I am not a man who takes things quietly—I was furious; when at



last I came up with them, I couldn't speak. They were riding slowly, the reins on the horses' necks, and, sir, they were looking at each other—there was love, shame, everything in their faces. We rode on. 'You should take care!' I said. *Eilie* turned her face to me: 'Care!' she said; 'life is not all taking care.' Sir, from that moment my anger left me. I rode behind, as your grooms ride behind their mistresses. They were not talking; he had put his hand upon the mane of her horse—under my very eyes; it was like him; and yet—I don't know that then he had anything in his heart. . . . Jealousy! Ah! what a debasing thing! There is no torture so ceaseless, so black. In those minutes a hundred things came up in my mind, a hundred memories, true, untrue, what do I know? My soul was poisoned. There were moments when I tried to reason, 'It's absurd; why do you think such things? It's unmanly. . . . Even if it's true, try to be a gentleman!' A gentleman! Sir, there have been times when I've laughed at the word." He seemed to take a fiercer grip of his stick; he spoke faster; it was as if he were pouring his heart out into the night, and I no more a live listener than the gravel beneath our feet. He still made use of his mechanical "*Sirs*," his reflections, the little bits of parched and pathetic philosophy. "I could not have slept that night; to lie near her with those thoughts in my brain! No! I made an excuse, and sat up over some papers—I don't know what they were about; in the morning I fell asleep. I woke while it was still early and walked into *St. James's Park*. The hardest thing in life is to see a thing coming, and do nothing to prevent it. I asked myself what I could do, what she would do? Have you noticed how people may become utter strangers without a word spoken, with nothing done—it only needs a thought. . . . That day she said, 'I wish to go to *Lucy's*.' 'Alone?' 'Yes, alone.' Sir, I had made up my mind that she must do as she wished. Perhaps I acted wrongly; I do not know what one ought to do in such a case. Just before she went I said, '*Eilie*, what is it?' She seemed to forget, she held up her face like a child. 'I don't know,' she said, and I kissed her, that was all. . . . Nearly a month passed; twice only I heard from her, short letters telling me nothing of herself. And *Dalton* was a torture to me, for I could not tell him; besides, he had a conviction that she was to become a mother. 'Ah! *Brune*!' he would say, 'my poor wife was just like that.' Life! Sir, an ironical business! *He*—forgive me, it's hard to say his name—he came to the school two or three times a week. I used to think I saw a change, a purpose growing up through all his recklessness. Sir, it may have been fancy, but when we fenced together there seemed a violence in him, as if he chafed against my blade; I had a kind of joy in feeling I had the mastery, was only playing with him, could have tossed the iron out of his hand any minute like a straw. I was ashamed, and yet I gloried in it—jealousy, sir, it is a low, low, thing! He asked me where *Eilie* was, and I told him, for I was too proud to

hide it. After that he did not come. Sir, it tore me to think that he might be with her. One morning when I could no longer bear it, I wrote. I said I was coming down, I would not force myself upon her, but I asked her to meet me in the orchard of the old house we called the Convent. I told her the time of my train; I asked her to be there at four o'clock. Sir, I hold that a man must not pray to a woman—what she can give him she will give. I sealed my letter, and went to the General Post Office to post it. I was afraid to give time for an answer; the next morning I went out early, and walked about until the time for my train. All the way down I kept on saying to myself, 'She must come—surely she will come!'

*(To be concluded)*

## SONNET

PLANS that first please fall often to the dust :  
Not that their aim is bad or past our power,  
But sober thoughts such pristine sweetness sour  
With acids of irresolute distrust.  
As angry men at night deep plots adjust  
And rush to words while black their passions lour,  
But swift repent them in the waking hour  
When memory startles them and swift disgust :  
So private plans and hopes yet unexpressed  
Die in their hundreds (though the many were  
Worthy of consummation swift and gay);  
Because their presence gives a mild unrest  
And threatens work perhaps for half a year.  
He wins no fame who plans for half a day.



## AS A MEANS OF PROGRESSION

BY AUTOMOBILE TO PARIS

AS a means of progression, we know but little of the automobile, or motor-car, in this country. You have only to voyage from Havre to Paris in an automobile, as we did, to become convinced that England marks fifty or sixty years behind France, in this matter, upon the clock of civilisation. And yet, in the early years of the century, England was leading the rest of the world towards a satisfactory solution of the problem of mechanical road-traction. In those days, steam omnibuses ran even into Cornwall. Then an accident happened; the British public was taken with one of those panics to which that respectable body is occasionally subject, and Parliament hastily made the red-flag-and-four-miles-an-hour law. That remarkable statute at once paralysed British invention, and gave the French their opportunity. They took up the business where we dropped it, utilised our experience (as why should they not?); borrowed some notions from the Germans; brought their own admirable ingenuity and patience to the work; and so, to-day, we observe that they have succeeded, on certain lines, in perfecting the automobile. There were, and indeed are, a certain number of lives violently lost in the process; but, upon human life, as such, the Frenchman sets no extravagant value. 'Tis excitement, not existence, that interests him. If he cannot have excitement, he would as lief be dead. And it is easy to die in the land of automobiles—the difficulty lies all the other way.

But England is otherwise inclined. We have not, even now, repealed the red-flag-and-four-miles-an-hour law. Two or three years ago we awoke one morning and saw, not without amazement, an automobile. It seemed a desirable toy; we wanted to go for a ride, but the law said, No, you mustn't. So we besieged that department of State upon which (as one has said) the sun never sets and the light of reason never rises, with prayers, arguments, threats, entreaties, until a new law was conceded to us: a law which allows motor-cars of not more than three tons weight when *empty* (as a man would naturally ramble about the country in an empty car, any restriction as to load is obviously superfluous) to run at a speed not exceeding ten miles an hour. "Tis a Solomon av a regulation, is that. I wud like to be introduced to the man that made ut." So much, then, for ourselves. What of our neighbours? Give your patience rein a little longer, and you shall know.

From a big, seaside town, all a-flutter and a-gleam in the misty September afternoon, where three or four waggonette motor-cars are solemnly ambling about the holiday streets, to Southampton Docks, where the Channel boats lie smoking red-eyed in the dark, and an anxious gentleman in the ticket-office is demanding a thousand-pound insurance (this, at the outset, is a trifle dispiriting), to the haggard morning streets of Havre, fearfully haunted, as in a dream, by gigantic dogs, came the Expert, the Irresponsible, and the Writer. The Expert came (unless I do him an injustice—he may have wanted a holiday) to investigate, from a strictly scientific point of view, the practical working of the French automobile; the Irresponsible came because he perceived in the automobile new variations of his favourite game, which may be concisely indicated as gambling with sudden death, with heavy odds against him. As for the Writer, he came to serve his private ends. To these three, then, in search of an automobile, a specious merchant recommends a choice of certain pagodas on solid-tyred wheels, which, duly curtained, would be highly suitable equipages for the suite of a travelling sultan. But we are no sultanas, we; and the pagodas are politely declined by the Expert. Then, the hand of Providence led us through a smart shop, filled with shining bicycles, into a paved yard, where a sturdy, brown-faced man, clothed in blue linen, is operating upon the exposed anatomy of a real automobile. It was exactly at this point that we struck our vein of luck. For this brown-faced, blue-clad gentleman was the *Mécanicien*—soon to be called, by a picturesque compromise, the *Academician*—who was to steer us swiftly by pleasant roads into the jaws of death and out again, for five long days. He owned the shop, and the bicycles, and the yard, and the automobile, and all; but he was a sportsman, and he consented to leave his all, and to drive three Englishmen whither they would. Have you seen the famous picture called *La Rive*? The face of the nearest man, who is being forcibly disarmed, is as the face of the *Academician*. He was a good man. His automobile was a good automobile. Power, 4 I.H.P.; speed, twenty miles an hour, at 750 revolutions a minute; weight, three-quarters of a ton; fuel, petroleum, and consumption, a ten-litre tin (holding about two gallons), costing two shillings and a penny, for every sixty miles; fitted with three change-speed gears, pneumatic tyres, glass wind-screen, and black leathern hood; carries four persons, two in front and two behind, sitting back to back, and stows about a hundredweight of baggage. She steers to an eighth of an inch, and stops within two yards at full speed—and well we knew these things before the end. She was four months old, and the *Academician* was even then fitting a new spring in front. "I hired her to one who cast her into an abyss," he explained. "Myself, I have never had an accident," he added, kindly. We were glad of that.

The same afternoon, as the automobile, restored to vigour, whirled us through the crowded traffic of the main streets, we began to appre-

hend the two points of honour that are the two irrefragable principles of the automobile-driver (son of the Guillotine by the *Pétroleuse*): the one, that you cannot shave too close; the other, to jeer at death and outrageously to flout his kingship. In front of one cart, and meeting another, horse's nose on your shoulder, horse's neck grazed by edge of wind-screen, between two hooting trams, ripping through a scattering mob of foot-passengers, just missing a motor-tricycle, out through the long paved streets, past the drowsy sentries, we emerge into the Paris road.

The Irresponsible shook hands with himself in gleeful silence. The Expert, who is accustomed to breaking in runaway engines and noting locomotive records while sitting on the buffers, and so forth, maintained a fine show of indifference. The writer tried to do the same. Havre dropped behind us, piling itself into an indistinguishable congeries of canal-end, warehouse, and tall chimney; the Academician shifts the change-gear lever into the high-speed notch; and the hum-hum of the engines swells upon a rising note. The girl riding a bicycle in divided skirts (and very neat garments they are) falls behind; the big, square farmers' carts are passed as though they stood still; a water-rat crossing the road in front, and reckoning on the pace of a horse and cart, sees his mistake just in time, trips in the grass and turns a somersault into the ditch.

"The automobile goes well, monsieur."

"Before that infamous one cast her into the abyss, she went twice as well," says the Academician. "You shall see, presently." We did. A black dot appears far ahead, grows momentarily larger, and a small automobile, carrying three, bears down upon us. This strikes the Academician as a favourable moment for lighting a cigarette. Now, the road is perhaps twelve feet wide; our car measures five feet three inches over all; the other car about the same. That does not leave much margin for two vehicles passing one another at fifteen miles an hour; but it was much more than they wanted. They wanted half an inch, and they took it. The Irresponsible chuckles and rubs his hands.

Down and down the long road, between the green and broken escarpment that walls the valley of the Seine, and the wide salt-marshes, where much cattle is grazing; behind, the vault of evening sky, long drawn in lines of grey and hued with sallow gleams; in front, a diminishing perspective, the road a white ribbon running to meet us. A glimpse of old wall, rich spire, converging glances of people at house-doors, and we are past Harfleur, famous in history. A girl, and a gentleman with a patch over his eye, taking a walk arm-in-arm, frown angrily from out the clouds of oil-smelling dust gyrating in our wake. We are sorry for them; but they should be automobilising, and then they would not suffer. There is scant room in France for those who do not automobilise. There is not too much margin for those who do, as we presently had reason to remark. At the foot of a long hill, the narrow road goes sharply about a double turn, a high wall on the right

hand, an unfenced brook on the left. Round we went at speed, and turned the second corner to pass another automobile, also travelling fast. Hats off, messieurs—we exchange salutations without apparent emotion—but, had we turned that corner three seconds later, nothing could have averted a collision.

"Luck—pure luck," says the delighted Irresponsible, who feels that he is in the way to give generous odds to his old antagonist. But, will the luck hold? Can we reasonably expect it to hold?

Away, away, humming down the long, straight avenues to the ferry, across the flood of the Seine, and up and up to a table-land set with ruddy orchards, whence we beheld all the valley and the river opening to the sea. Presently the road began to go steeply down again, in sharp curves, as is the manner of French roads. Then, as the Academician had said, we saw what the automobile could do. He pulled over the lever that slips the engines out of gear, and we began to drift downhill like a leaf before the wind. Now, I have the highest respect and esteem for the Academician, confirmed by subsequent experience; but, we were reluctantly convinced that, upon this his first day with the three strange Englishmen, he permitted himself to indulge in a little vanity of display. At the first turn was a laden cart coming, another going. The Academician began to roll a cigarette with one hand . . . we were through the carts and round the corner—somehow. Two more carts, and a group of peasants on foot—the Academician, with the tail of his eye in front, lit his cigarette at the Irresponsible's, who was leaning over the back seat, filled with a fearful joy. The obstruction in front opening out, at the last moment we twisted through it. But, how are we to turn the next corner? The hedges are flying past in a green mist, the dust behind rises like a wall, and—what is this smell of burning? It is the leathern band of the brake, singeing on its drum. Round we go, somehow, flying down to the paved street of the town, black with people and carts and children and dogs. Fast as we go, a motor-tricycle, ridden by a bare-armed, brown-bearded maniac in a striped jersey, runs past us, clacking like a mill. Things in front disperse in the nick of time . . . "Fine church!" observes the Expert, airily, waving his hand at a yellow flash of carved stonework. We were over a bridge and round two corners before the words were out of his mouth—we took his word for it. So we descended upon Pont-Euemer, the end of the first stage. It was a satisfying entrance. Peace fell upon us, as though a thunderstorm were suddenly silenced, as we stepped from the quivering machine into the cool twilight, and the noise of chiming bells, and the savour of a new town.

Who does not know the French provincial inn? The leisurely *table-d'hôte*, the climax and apotheosis of the day, with the yard of bread and the bottle of rough red wine, and the very fat young Frenchman sitting opposite, who seems to have been consuming over-spiced victuals in that place ever since he was born; the spacious bedroom with the solid mahogany bedsteads decently retired in alcoves; the

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unabashed windows which look straight across the gulf of street into the windows opposite, inviting reprehensible curiosity; the clamour in the *café* below, that keeps you from sleep at night, and the jingle of the early carts that awakes you in the chill of the dawn—who, I say, that knows the country inn abroad, but recalls its memories with a pleasant regret?

The great glory and surpassing pride of Pont-Eudemer is in their electric light. It is a new thing to the people of Pont-Eudemer, and they cannot have too much of it. In the hotel smoking-room, whose dimensions are perhaps eighteen feet by twelve, there were thirty-four unshaded glow lights. One felt like a moth in a lamp.

The Expert, who has an unchastened passion for churches, desired (guide-book in hand) to visit the church of Pont-Eudemer before breakfast the next morning. We reminded him that we had already seen that fine building, but he insisted upon a further investigation as upon a duty. We pointed out to him that automobiles and churches are extremely antipathetic, and that one should not mix impressions. He may have gone alone to indulge his illicit craving—we tactfully avoided the subject when we met over *café-au-lait*.

Out of Pont-Eudemer (why do foreign streets present so dissipated an aspect in the morning) in a cold white mist, to the road again. The vapour disperses in the strong sun, and a wide prospect of tilled fields and groves and isolated poplars shines in the thin air, glimmers in the distance, and melts into grey-blue haze. Moving as we move, the landscape glances in a series of pictures, with the tall column of the poplar insistent in the foreground, as though smudged in with the artist's thumb. The blue-clad peasants trudge by in the dust, with laden mule or donkey; here is a cottage with a secret eye of a dormer window peering from its thatch behind the poplar standing sentinel at the gate; then, the oblong of a village street opens ahead, passes in a glimpse of flat-faced houses and stolid inhabitants, piles up behind us, roof and wall and chimney, and is gone.

A white spire glinting from the green, the Expert wistfully announces a church built (according to his guide-book) by an English king, what time this land belonged to England. We cannot but admit this pretext—we concede a church to the Expert, leave the car panting at the gate, and enter the place of graves, rank with neglected grass and glittering with tinsel memorials. If English piety gave the church, French artistry made it. None save a Frenchman carved the monstrous gargoyles that leer and straddle above the heads of the devout, things to put maid and bachelor—all save a priest—to the blush. Here, in those few minutes, under the hot sun, we beheld the whole of France in little. The graceful monument dominating the smiling countryside and the meagre village colony; within its walls, peace, and the immemorial emblems of eternal hope; without, a riot in stone of dog-faced obscenity, and decorated graves.

The engines hum again, and hum louder, and strike into the mono-

tone that's ever in our ears; and we are slipping along a Route Nationale at full speed. The road runs as smooth as a biscuit, all barred with shadow and sun, between borders of level grass and ranks of tall trees, full fifteen miles in a straight line. Behind us, its yellow length rises like a plank set on end. At the top of the plank appears a tiny blur. It expands swiftly, although we are travelling away from it at twenty miles an hour. A moment—a flash of scarlet and brass, a glimpse of three demoniac, be-goggled faces, a single clanging detonation, and the racing automobile has vanished in a bank of dust. "Soixante-dix!" says the Academician, with a grin. He means that this terrific engine is running at seventy kilomètres, that is, between forty and fifty miles an hour. The Irresponsible beams with delight; then a shadow falls upon him. "I *did* think," he complains, "that *we* were doing pretty well . . ." Henceforth, he lives but to drive a Soixante-dix. The Pit expects him; and his familiar adversary holds a full hand.

The dust has scarce settled before we meet one of the thirty-foot carts, laden with timber and drawn by three miserable horses, which are common in France. The horse in the shafts shies, jerking the tail of the cart across the road—we are switched off the road and on the grass, at right angles, and back again, grazing a pile of logs. The Academician, who has averted a bad smash, looks a little grim, but he says nothing. No one says anything—and the engines take up their chant and hum all along the stately avenues into Evreux. The little white town is a station on the main road to Paris; and here, attached to the hotel, are coach-house, workshop, and oil-store for automobiles. Indeed, every village is placarded with "Essence pour Automobiles" and "Garage pour Automobiles," all the way we went. And in Evreux, as we sat at breakfast, machines were going and coming like hornets to and from a nest.

Why is it that destiny must always drag us, after a strong breakfast, to look at that which we do not want to see? There was an hour or two to spare in Evreux—we could not deny it; the Expert was inflexible, and we walk gloomily round a church which (we thanked a blessed Providence) was hard by the hotel. The Expert is under the impression that he is seeing the cathedral; we are careful to preserve this delusion; but, reading in his eternal guide-book, he presently discovers the real cathedral to be at the other end of the town. Thither we trail in the sun, down the middle of the street. Tourists always walk in the middle of the street. Had the Expert any pleasure out of his churches, we could have borne them gladly; but, it is a singular fact that I never saw a man more profoundly depressed than was the Expert, vaguely steering by his guide-book through incense-laden glooms. He will not be angry when he reads these words, for he knows he has our sympathy.

The sun declining, the blotted trees of the avenues are changed to colonnades of dusky sheen; the high-laden carts, blue-clad peasants



shuffling alongside, come home through the long shadows ; and a cool air whispers from the leaves as we take the road. We are chased for miles by a negro clad in a huge black peaked cap and a black rubber coat, driving a small "Richard" automobile. But the Academician, in a Panhard-Levasseur, had no idea of being outpaced by a coloured person in a George Richard. He pressed the lever that admits more petroleum into the engine ; and the Richard, looking like a monstrous beetle, dwindled to a dot in the level sunlight, and was no more seen.

Running down the long hill out of Mantes the next morning, in the thick mist, a figure staggered across the road. We brushed his shoulder, and so saved the life of that untimely wine-bibber. He was the only drunken man we saw in France ; but, the question is, how can a man be drunk at eight o'clock in the morning ?

Presently, the pied fields are shimmering in a delicate radiance of sunshine ; the white road is pencilled with transparent shadows ; near hand, a golden haystack gleams upon a distance of blue haze. So, for miles, between the row of trees, the brown spaces where an earth-coloured shell of a man is ploughing with oxen, yellow stubble, meadows of light purple flowers, fallow patches dimly brilliant, like a mosaic, with little, blossoming weeds. Down the hill in front of us a black dot comes rushing, and a motor-tricycle, pedals frantically whirling, girl in front, man behind, sweeps round a bend with a flash of polished brass. And so, all day long : the sunshine burning brighter, the dust thickening, the shadows changing, automobiles and tricycles shooting like lost stars across the peaceful plains ; the heat diminishing, until the leaves turn to shivering gold, the twilight steals abroad, and the car ripples over the setts into the inn-yard ; and four disreputable nondescripts, powdered grey and caked with dust, looking ten years older since the new-washed morning, descend stiffly from their quivering, indefatigable steed.

So, to Paris and the Porte Maillot. Here is the automobile quarter. Here are automobile shops and storehouses ; here swarming up and down the boulevard, automobiles for business and pleasure ; automobiles electric and petroleum ; automobiles red, black, yellow, blue, purple ; motor-tricycles, motor-bicycles ; ordinary bicycles towing a gentleman sitting at ease in a basket-chair, ridden on the footpath by smart ladies (with a glimpse of divided skirts turned up with scarlet), by soldiers, gendarmes, clerks, workmen—all the world.

How is it that, while the law of Paris limits speed to nine miles an hour, a gentleman on a motor-tricycle comes rushing up the boulevard as hard as he can drive ? He is black as a sweep, wire-spectacled, begirt with spare tyres, like a new kind of life-belt, placarded on the breast with a huge *Numero 25*. This hero is first in a race, it seems ; a crowd surrounds and embraces him, peers at and fingers his machine while he breakfasts, and cheers him as he shoots away again.

You can do a good deal, even at nine miles an hour. As we voyaged about Paris all day, we saw—and experienced—more hairbreadth deliverances than we could reckon.

The splendid city shone, grey and bright, veiled in autumn haze. Drifting, drifting down the yellowing avenues, in the full flood of the crowd; twisting in and out the wild traffic, past façade and statue, fountain and column and triumphal arch, to the blunt towers of Nôtre Dame, standing sentinel over the bridges—thus did we behold the casket of the glory of France. No marvel that the provinces are empty and dull, the peasantry starved and meagre, the wide plains desolate of habitation. All ambition, riches, art, and knowledge are woven into this glittering, magnificent web; and the nations are drawn into its meshes, as of old they were gathered to the lure of Babylon.

It was a shameless piece of sight-seeing. We had not, at first, intended to come to Paris. We had planned a journey to the southward, to Chartres, and the castles (the Expert likes castles, too) of the Loire. Why, then, were we here? The fact is, we had been as clay in the hands of the potter. We saw it all, now. When we proposed routes, the Academician hearkened with a portentous gravity. None more willing than he to carry us whither we would, but— There was always a but. Of course it was as we pleased, *but*—the road was rough, or the road was dull, or the hotels were bad, or the distances extreme. Now, if we took this way, on the contrary—! The Academician knew the road to Paris; he had a friend in every hotel; did not his wife's mother's aunt dwell near the metropolis? It was true we had profited by these things; we had been well served, and cheaply lodged, and comfortably guided throughout. And, being in Paris, we could not but admit that we were glad to be there. Our luck had held to the last. On the whole, we forgave the Academician.

L. COPE CORNFORD.

## THE CLERK

## A STUDY IN POVERTY

HE was a man and she was a woman ; and when you have said so much you have exhausted the analogy and sharpened the points of distinction between them. He was what kindly natured people call (with a slight incidence on the adjective) " a poor clerk " ; and she lived, during one part of the year at least, in Mayfair. Now, this state of matters will often terminate in a romance if the man be a revolutionist—religious, social, artistic.

First of all, though, let me give you a notion of how he appeared to a mere detective intelligence like myself before I had learned my lesson of him. Have you never bought a dog of the dealers ? He is just adult, this dog which you have bought ; and you take him home, and house him comfortably, and feed him well, so he will love you very much, wagging his silly tail at your approach, and putting on the appearance of being very gay. Sometimes he will, in a moment of abandon, even bark ; but it is momentary ; a cabby has only to switch his whip in the vicinity—down goes his tail ; he runs to the wall ; he is at once convicted of original sin, looking up at you with wistful eyes, and not daring to wander again very far away from your sphere of influence and the only kindness he ever experienced. Such a dog then he appeared to every vulgarian. And could a romance, I asked, grow out of such a connection ? Yes, surely. Though, indeed, in the great romances of history it was rarely the woman, and almost always the man, who condescended : for so it is recorded even of Zeus himself and of King Cophetua. For it is deeply involved in the scheme of things that the great lady who wishes to love you clandestinely can have you in only by the back door. Still, romance, true romance, does really consist in disparity, and not in equality ; in the struggle to attain on one side at least : nay, in apparent failure, in actual failure, in hopelessness, in darkness. There alone are all the finer undertones ever really stolen and rendered exquisite : the gentle voice, the rapt attention. And as for the Great, who may not carve for themselves—do they miss anything, are they happiest, do you think ?

My poor clerk, going to bed, like Goethe, regularly at ten, would begin his day very early in summer-time. At four or five o'clock, even, you would meet him any morning passing from his lodging hard by that home elect of the hopeless—often the very shamelessly hopeless : the actor, with soul quite subdued to what it works in ; the lame, the halt, the blind of literature—passing quietly along by the Museum, stopping

for a moment to watch the pigeons busily engaged at this season, flying up and down from their nests in the pediment, rendered so dignified, so chill and bare-looking, by the shadowless, all-penetrating morning light. Thence, at the noise of the policeman, the all-nighter, or the grimy labourer stepping eastward, moving on into Oxford Street, or round by Shaftesbury Avenue to Piccadilly, until those quaint and narrow passages, Stratton Street, Bolton Street, Clarges Street, Half Moon Street, Down Street, Brick Street, began to open on the right, and he would become more meditative and slow-paced, halting at last at the corner of one of them, and finally, on the approach of some impertinent milkman, disappearing noiselessly and timidly in their direction.

For hours after this, Mayfair, as you know, will be sound asleep. But you may meet any of the before-mentioned individuals there: the milkman, the policeman, the tradesman, the labourer; or over by the Square railings, the two gentlemen still in evening dress, helping their brother to be ill, though perhaps for their case it is grown a little late. And then, since bicycling came to be so outrageous a vogue, it is not advisable to be about; for here or there a door may open and close silently, and the lady with whom you have been dancing a few hours before, or her maid, perhaps, will push her machine across the path, and, fresh-looking, erect and athletic, and without taking any notice of your presence, pass you by, vanishing quickly towards the Park for her morning spin.

Those streets, those houses! In what consisted long ago for you their fascination, their power? Did they not for the most part belong to your father's tradesmen, or even to your father's men-servants and maid-servants, who, by saving and adding to their little all year after year, by observing the manner of life you lived, by acquiring some of those tricks of character which belonged to you alone, at last became capable of leasing the very house in which you were born, of lodging you, feeding you, acting towards you *in loco parentis*, the most capable persons in the world? For of course you would tolerate nothing less from any of them, be they old servants, or poor relations, a dozen times: they have now parted with their poverty and their independence, become the meanest of creatures, and so must compete for your custom with their kind. But in that righteous war which is waged continually between Mayfair and Bohemia, strange it is that though a skirmish here and there, and even a battle now and then, seem to be lost to the barbarians, yet final victory is to them, is to the inhabitants of Mayfair. Alas, it is that the Bohemian camp is full of traitors and reactionaries; it is that deep down in his own heart the Bohemian cares for nothing in Bohemia except the distinction it confers, but is always looking with longing eyes over to the enemy's camp, desiring everything he sees there: the lights, the riches, the reserved men, the beautiful women, the capable servants, the cleanly, straightforward ways, the stoicism, the intelligence, and whatever else the vulgar scribbler, ready at any moment to be bought

and sold for it, imagines it to be, bringing its contempt down not only upon himself, but upon all true soldiers of the crown.

In the middle of this gay place, then, but where yet life never seems quite to forget that Sunday is not very far away, you would find our poor clerk o' mornings, slowly walking up and down a certain one of these passages, deserted during the lulls by every sound but that the milk cans, the chirp of the early sparrow, or the "Oo—look-at-the-fool! Oo—look-at-the-fool!" of the amorous pigeons. By-and-by, perhaps, he will be joined by a girl of about twenty summers, who will march up to him in military style, holding her hand straight out and giving him a good warm shake; and then, without a word, both will walk off towards the Park, getting away amongst the trees, but avoiding the water, which at this hour is full of bathers. Perhaps she will not appear immediately, perhaps not at all this morning. And then at about six or seven o'clock he will turn and walk back again calmly. In any case he would be sure to have returned by eight.

This practice I knew him to continue for nearly six seasons, so regularly and inevitably do events happen in the old town of ours where every one "comes back"; where, after all, Civilisation, that monster of our younger prophets, with all its gaiety, has learned to be so steady and well-conducted—at least, the best part of it: the permanent class, the good and simple people destined to carry on the tradition while brilliancy and brains are flashing and gadding about anywhere at all hours, towards certain extinction in a few years if haply they don't learn manners meantime, since in these matters there is but one law for the poor clerk going to his garret and the king driving to his palace. And gradually my manifest if somewhat officious good nature got the better of him completely and broke down his embarrassment, and then he told me a good deal about himself, and I discovered that he was not a mere sorry dog at all, but quite a new kind of animal to meet with.

Can you understand, do you think? Do you ever, in the most unaffected and honest way, sit quite alone of a winter's evening, without any light but the flicker now and then of a low fire, really feeling what a waste is this life of yours upon which you look back, how vain even the most rosy thoughts you have for the future, out of which you try to suck some present nourishment, till, inside also, you begin to feel that you are terribly "without any light"? For of course I suppose you to be one of those foolish people who have long ago exchanged the faith that was in them, the faith that satisfied their fathers, for other counters, transcendental, mystical, or any new arithmetic by which they try to reckon up the cost of the journey, and that the church bell calling you to prayer and the drum calling you to war, both call now in vain to you—have long ago died out of your attention, and no more attract it than the mouse that nibbles your cheese. In which case, more fool you, say I.

But this is just what happened to my poor clerk while as a youth the will in him was strong to live ; and so the rest, for many a year, was—silence : the kind of youthful derelict you now meet or hear talk of in every second family of your acquaintance : the species growing as common as the familiar poor young fellow who “ had sunstroke in India ” (according to the explanation of his kind aunt, while his more candid friend lets you into the secret). Few there be, though, that sail into any sort of a happy lighted harbour after many years of that kind of thing, as did my poor clerk. For the church bell and the drum and the crowning citadel over all—these are the things!—the great, generous things, symbolising a generous national human life. And while the “ Monastery or the World ” is the final choice submitted to all souls, little ones, for the most part, who condemn the crowd, are either clever schismatics who think they have discovered a better way, or hole-and-corner people who live altogether for private gain and petty ends, or, like my poor friend, lavish, deluded creatures, who practically cease altogether to live, through getting right out of the main streams of either wise or wayward, sailing up and down on some little by-eddy or back-water, making perhaps a great movement, splashing, and noise withal, and for the time being, till, distraught, they find themselves at last upon the shoals, or in the dead water of some weed-and-toad-engendering private pond, which to possess, and live there in frightful peace, is thereafter allotted them.

Still, to have foolishly parted with the large, rough, wholesome counters, from time immemorial in use with humanity, in exchange for some petty coinage of one's own discovery is, before high heaven, it seems, treason to be condoned after due repentance, forfeit, and escheat. And it seems that though thus you have indeed cheated yourself of the glow and thrill of the life which you only once have a chance of living at all, yet in the terrible after-silence on the shore, when the flood tide has all but receded from a man, may come to him a revelation, some mere wisdom about that life which he has missed, denied to actual living souls.

And such a revelation, but at first in the form of a breathing angel in the flesh, had come to my friend sitting in despairful darkness on one of those winter evenings long ago. His closed door was pushed open gently, and out of his old, happy, betrayed, forgotten boyhood of religion and soldiery, came right in to him there, sat and talked with him for hours, the one who comes to every man but once in his life, and then disappears—for him, at least—for ever. But with her coming the dying truth within him struggled up, fought for life again, grew to the best that it could ever be.

When he saw her he knew at once what manner of creature she was : that she must go from him very soon—he had no illusions on that point, and was content, so changed was he from long ago. He would as soon have thought of talking to her about himself and his loneliness now, as he would to an actual angel come in pity to

him that dark evening straight down from heaven itself. But already he found himself thinking of, believing in, a heaven—and *that*, merely, was the revelation !

Yes, amid all this darkness and despair, there is a God that watches over the whole, if we can only search Him out ; there is a God who cares, if we can only understand. And it seems the more one understands the more one grows in humility. This is how he came to be a poor clerk.

But for a long time, of course, I named him to myself a dog, and hinted as much to him at times, seeing that it was a sorry spirit that did not bring the romance to an issue, for she was very beautiful. But so soon as I had hinted at a romance, he at once looked at me in his mild, decided way and repeated a verse or two of a poem which I hunted down some time afterwards for myself :

“ But when the lips I breathed upon  
Asked for such love as equals claim—  
I looked where all the stars were gone,  
Burned in the day’s immortal flame—

“ Come thou, like you great dawn, to me  
From darkness vanquished, battles done.” . . .

Alas, from these he never came to her. She is married long ago, and he is dead. He was only a poor clerk, and he remained one to the end. Richer, nevertheless, I discovered, than many I know.

J. DE R.



## FANCY'S FLIGHT

DOWN the lane and up the hill,  
     Over sunlit slopes, and over  
     Lawns where grew the daffodil,  
     Meadow-uplands white with clover,  
 Shadow-waving fields of wheat,  
     Dykes luxuriant in sloth  
 Blossoming with meadow-sweet ;  
     Burgeoning with undergrowth :  
 Down a copse where daylight's glimmer  
 Through the distance twinkles dimmer :  
     Down the thicket's outer edge,  
 Where amid the gloom beyond  
     Sleeps the dim-reflected hedge  
 In the rushy-margined pond :

Down the dingles, up the fells,  
     Up the mossy-matted path,  
 'Mid the magic pimpernels  
     Hemming in the fairy rath,  
 Hard by runnels, over bridges,  
 Over valleys, downs and ridges,  
 On by many a field and bower,  
     On through many a gorgeous grove,  
 Day by day and hour by hour  
     Swallow-winged the fancies rove.

E. H. THOROLD.



## WILD BIRD SONG

**I**F I could believe in the transmigration of souls, it would be in the waver and warble of birds that I should recognise some thought most akin to my thought, and be quickest stirred to experience once again some long-lost pain of unforgotten emotion.

But as I listen, and those deep wells of unexplained sadness are stirred, the joyousness of creatures altogether glad denies all cognisance of human heartache, and I know, with an intuition that brooks no argument, that the bird heart is not as the human heart, a quivering lyre tuned to its finest songs by the discipline of pain. The dove that mourns, the nightingale that sings "her breast uptill a thorn," are poet's fancies: the voices of wild birds are no kindred voices but the unknown tongue of a race apart.

How little we understand as we listen! Only one thing is clear to us all, from the dreamy sentimentalist to the practical naturalist, that the birds' spring song is a song of joy. Love which for us is fraught with the menace of pain seems to have for them no shadow of fear, and with the first return of sunshine the birds, one and all, plunge without a care into courtship. Then the woods begin to murmur and the valleys to sing, the mountain sides re-echo, and the streams warble with the welcome of their feet, whose soft hopping and pattering, whose glancing wing and dancing grip of branch and bough, bear them to and fro on love's errand. Then it is we listen all amazed to the beauty of bird song.

I would have you go first to the mountain-side to listen to the music. High up where the stream slips first like a sinewy adder from its hole, and then, losing semblance of all cohesive form, foams and bubbles down its narrow rocky bed. So many know the mountains in autumn; so few in spring. Yet it is the birds that lead you there at all times, and I venture to say there is as much pleasure in hearing a bird sing as in seeing it shot. How now? Do I hear a chorus of disgust? Listen then to the ring ousel, the thrush of the mountain, and of all that voiceful family the one without compare. There is a wild ring in the voice of the mountain thrush that rivals the abandon of the missel thrush in storm; there is a thrill in its warbling that outdoes the blackbird's finest efforts; there is the sweetness of the redwing and the tunefulness of the mavis, and each is touched with the salt of wildness that goes to the root of the old savage affinities that slumber in civilised man, making him taste again the joys of his elemental love of freedom. There are harebells for heatherbells, and the grouse, no longer fugitive in frightened packs, are nesting in the

ling; and deep in the heather the singer himself has an anchorage for his wild little heart where the patient hen is sitting; but in the time of softness and sweetness and home-coming, his song is nevertheless the ballad of a thing untamed. The bare-footed, shock-headed highland boy creeps up the stream-side to listen, and, as he lurks there unbetrayed among the rock boulders, and the bird flings itself into the abandonment of its song, he chafes at the restraints of his cottage home, and dreams the dream that is one of the first delusive enticements of boy life, and fancies himself running away to sea. The wave is in the migrant birds' song, and the gurgle of deep rock pools, and the swish of the spray as he sings to the young stream and sends it, too, rushing off to the open sea. All the heights are the ring ousel's home, and from the highest slopes of Scotch and Welsh hills to the tors of Dartmoor it sings the song that must be hard to listen to from behind the walls of Princetown. The hills of Derbyshire and the Cheviots are a fitting setting to its music; the broken courses of rich song bubble across rolling solitudes like the watercourses that chase silvery furrows on their grim sides. A quick piping, then a few harsh notes, and then such a carolling from the white throat that gleams against a pile of grey rocks, that long, long afterwards it has power to call up the restless mountain wildness as it re-echoes in the chambers of memory.

But what is wildness, and what are its allurements? The clamour of the sea, the quick escapement of the brown stream, unpathed expanse of moorland, glimmer of far-off stars at night, the scent of a flower, the cry of a bird, what is the chord these strike, what are the harmonies and discords of unexplained emotions that stir at their bidding?

Wild. The word comes to us from old Scandinavian roots and is akin in all northern languages, always meaning "mazed, astray, bewildered." Primarily of any creature, it is true, it implies freedom of will, liberty to follow its own sweet will. But it is not this that holds for us the fascination of wildness. Mazed, astray, bewildered. The wilds—unmapped countries where the traveller may lose his way. The wilderness—a waste where no chart guides and the explorer adventures himself into the unknown. A wild thought, a wild wish, a wild whim—flights of more than fancy wherewith the mind leaps the barriers of the known and starts on a pilgrimage in the undiscovered country. Mystery on mystery, it is this that is unfolded when aught of wildness penetrates the armour of our conscious life, and emotions hid deep and hungering perpetually wake to conscious pain or joy as we are stirred by the green fire of spring, the soft flame of the flowers, the wildfire of bird song. Few by the use of human speech can touch us thus. Of late years, perhaps, only one—that unknown poet that sings for us in the disguise of Fiona Macleod—but there are songs in the music of the wind, in the murmur of the water, in the songs of the birds, that strike the deep-laid harp-strings because of this quality of wildness.

If I place the song of the ring ousel first among the voices that I love it is by no means because it stands alone. Even on the bleak heights, mountain finches and chats whistle and call, and the rippling voice of the dipper accompanies the babble of the stream. And presently the mountain singers are left behind, the blue gleam of the kingfisher's bright wing gleams across the river, and swallows chase to and fro. Then it enters the woodland and its banks resound with varied song. Shouting cuckoos call, thrush and blackbirds carol, and all that sweet-voiced family of warblers tune the way. Woodwren, blackcap, robin, and him that night and day pours forth abundantly sweet song.

"I think," said Portia,

"The nightingale if she could sing by day  
When every goose is cackling, would be thought  
No better a musician than a wren ;"

and true it is, that though in every sylvan district the nightingales add no little to the chorus of bird song, their daylight strains are but little praised. Alone, at night, save for the occasional wakefulness of cuckoo, thrush or warbler, the nightingale wakes the sleeping world, and again in this aloneness as in the solitude of the mountains or the seashore the note of wildness in birdsong is accentuated. "Bewildered in the maze of life," we are arrested by something that strikes home as the moonlight is sung into our hearts by the wild and beautiful strain, and conscious thought is passive while some unrecognised remembrance is dimly illumined.

"Believe me, love, it was the nightingale." Is there any mistaking the laureate of bird song? Its plaintive call-note is like the robin's, the sedge-warbler has personated its lesser performance, the blackcap successfully mimics a great portion of its lay, but when for very sport of power it goes from one cadence to another all through its chaplet of song, there is no mistaking the singer. Commencing gradually with a few tentative notes it breaks into music, and passes from long-drawn sighs of sweetness to a bravura of mechanical achievement unsurpassed. Infinitely varied, the song is like the "hundred-tongues" of the blue robin of Sweden, ringing changes perpetually and modulating without end. The minor key is touched here and there, but if there be a touch of melancholy, it is but the complaining of one that indulges some fictitious luxury of woe, and not the sob of a broken heart or the still more eloquent silence of a slain heart. The chief refrain is of joy, and this joy adds to the quality of wildness. Mazed, bewildered, astray, we stand verily, and indeed, for of all things that are hard of comprehension when we stand outside their precincts, joy is the most bewildering. Yet in this same amazement the unknown which is within us is touched by the unknown which lies beyond, and we follow the sound of *se wilda fugel*, bewitched. Is it

hard for one who is attracted by the voices of spring to understand how some cannot bear to hear the song of the nightingale? Not the loud chorus that chases sleep where those hundreds of nightingales foregather on Mediterranean shores, we can imagine the too much sweetness of that, but the sweet solo or the doubly sweet duet that floats across the meadows from an English wood. Yet even this is to some ears unbearable. "In the forest of St. Leonard's in Southsaxe, there doth never sing nightyngale, although the foreste round about is replenished with nightyngales," wrote an ancient chronicler, referring to the story that the holy recluse St. Leonard had found the nightingale's song so intolerable that he had banished the bird. The nightingales have forgotten the ban long since, and those remnants of the deep woods that once enforested the whole weald of Sussex, resound with their singing when the cock birds land in large flocks and camp there to await the arrival of the hens. Then no melancholy woe of the traditional nightingales, but a very tumult of gay song is loud in the woods. Perhaps, of old, it was this very quality of joy, this flaunting of joy before a sorrow-laden heart that the anchorite could not bear, the glad outpouring of happy creatures literally wild with joy.

The singer of the loneliness of night, the singer of the loneliness of the hills, there is yet a third that with these two is chief among the voices that I love. The singer of the lone sea shore is another whose songs of wilderness echo in the waste places of human life. This is the sandpiper at evening on the strand. Night falls, and in the dusk the shining pools that have circled the rocks with a golden setting lie dark in the lap of the dim sands, the cloud of evening has blotted out all objects of vision, and the ear is doubly attentive to the ministry of sound. From the cliffs where a colony of guillemots crowds on a rocky ledge, a hum as of wind in the tree-tops floats down to meet the murmur of the sea, and both are so monotonous that they but serve to emphasize the quietude. At our feet there are tiny, almost imperceptible sounds where humble forms of life stir in the seaweed. Overhead there is the occasional soft whisper of the wind as it eddies in its swift nightly rush from the chill of the mountains, and in the deepening gloom wherein all visible things go out of sight you can see the path of the invisible wind for it trails in its wake long white skirts of mist. All else is veiled from view. We can barely see to pick up the white feathers the gulls have left strewn the place where they fed. We can barely see the scalloped outline where the sea fringe lies upon the sand. Yet the note of wildness is not struck. We are in the dark, that is all, and we are accustomed to that. But suddenly, and softly, a clear, low whistle sounds from the darker stretches of weedy rock, a musical plaintive call, and suddenly the sea shore stretches mile upon mile towards what land we know not, and the deep waters spread vast and far, on and out to unknown mysteries of space, the great grey dome is pierced with the scintillating glimmer of worlds beyond worlds, and the very ground at

our feet rocks as we rush through time and space. The note of wildness has struck home, the spot that is blind in the human eye, and deaf in the human ear, and dumb in the human tongue, holds intercourse with things beyond. The sealed chambers are not opened, but we become aware of their existence. The wild whistle is repeated on and on into the darkness, dying away till it is lost in the distance where the player trips unseen over the wet seaweed with his magic flute. Perhaps this very night he is starting on his long flight to those far-off, icy regions where the sandpipers nest, for this bird is only a passing visitor to our shores. This is a thought to make the mind travel. What a journey across that rough North Sea, and over moor, and fell, and then sea again, right on into the northern lights, and the nightless summer, and the peaks of eternal ice! Truly there is enough in the life-story of a bird to widen human understanding. Perhaps it is no more than this that amazes, and bewilders, and leads the mind deliciously astray when wild birds sing

FLORENCE A. FULCHER.

